DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 442 549 PS 028 588

AUTHOR	Moss, Peter
TITLE	Workforce Issues in Early Childhood Education and Care.
PUB DATE	2000-05-00
NOTE	56p.; Paper presented at the Consultative Meeting on International Developments in Early Childhood Education and Care (New York, NY, May 11-12, 2000).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative (142) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Child Care Occupations; Child Caregivers; Day Care; *Early Childhood Education; Foreign Countries; Labor Force; *Labor Force Development; National Programs; *National Surveys; Policy Analysis; Staff Role; Training
IDENTIFIERS	Caregiver Training; Day Care Quality; European Union

ABSTRACT

This paper addresses, in two parts, some issues in the staffing of early childhood services. Taking an international perspective, the first part of the paper discusses: (1) the structure of the early childhood workforce; (2) the social construction of the early childhood worker; (3) gender; (4) staff to child ratios; (5) processes of transition in the reform of staffing; (6) the relationship between the staffing of early childhood services and other services for children; and (7) family day care. This part concludes with a series of questions about the staffing of early childhood services, especially concerning training and education, and presents, as a basis for discussion, a set of targets for staffing drawn from a larger set of 40 "quality targets" produced by the European Commission Childcare Network, an expert group drawn from the European Union's member states. The second part of the paper consists of accounts of staffing in center-based early childhood services in six case countries. This part provides detailed material to illustrate the general points made in part one. The six countries selected for special attention are Denmark, France, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. They were selected because they illustrate most of the range of diversity outlined in part one, with the exception that five of the six have integrated responsibility for all early childhood services within one system and government department, while most countries continue to divide responsibility between education and welfare systems. (Contains 67 references.) (Author/EV)

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ED 442 549

Workforce Issues in Early Childhood Education and Care

For consultative meeting on
International Developments in Early Childhood Education and Care
The Institute for Child and Family Policy
Columbia University, New York
May 11-12, 2000

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Abstract

The paper addresses some issues in the staffing of early childhood services and is in two parts. Taking an international perspective, the first part discusses: the structure of the early childhood workforce; the social construction of the early childhood worker; gender; staff:child ratios; processes of transition in the reform of staffing; the relationship between the staffing of early childhood services and other services for children; and family day care. This part concludes with a series of critical questions about the staffing of early childhood services, especially concerning training and education, and presents, as a basis for discussion, a set of targets for staffing drawn from a larger set of 40 'quality targets' produced by the European Commission Childcare Network, an expert group drawn from the European Union's member states. The second part of the paper consists of an account of staffing in centre-based early childhood services in six 'case' countries: this part provides some detailed material to illustrate the general points made in Part One. The six countries selected for special attention are: Denmark, France, New Zealand, Spain; Sweden and the United Kingdom. They have been selected because they illustrate most of the range of diversity outlined in Part One. However in an important respect the choice is skewed. Five of the six countries have integrated responsibility for all early childhood services within one system and one Government Department (all, with the exception of Denmark, within education), when most countries continue to divide responsibility between education and welfare systems.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 How the paper is organised

This paper is about the staffing of early childhood services[1]. The main focus is the structure, training (or education) and qualifications of the workforce, and understandings or constructions of the early childhood worker. But it also raises other issues such as pay and gender.

I have organised the paper in two parts. The first part considers a number of issues in the staffing of early childhood services, focusing primarily on my knowledge of the countries of the European Union, and some English-speaking, non-European countries, notably New Zealand and the United States. I have made some generalisations about the main features of staffing in these countries, in particular distinguishing major differences in the structure of staffing, while noting (and reflecting upon) the highly gendered nature of staffing in all cases. I have tried to explain differences in the structure of staffing in relation both to the *structuring* of services (i.e. staffing reflects how services are organised), and to underlying *understandings* or constructions of early childhood, early childhood institutions, early childhood work, pedagogical theory and practice (i.e. staffing reflects what we think the work is about). What I think emerges is that issues of staffing are not just technical and managerial, but also political and ethical: as Carlina Rinaldi (the recently retired director of early years services in Reggio Emilia) observes "behind every solution and organisation is a choice, a choice of values, a social and political choice and a responsibility for that choice".

I have ended this first part in two ways. First, with a series of critical questions about the staffing of early childhood services, especially concerning training and education. Second, with *a* conclusion, in the form of a set of targets for staffing drawn from a larger set of 40 'quality targets'. These targets were produced by the European Commission Childcare Network, an expert group drawn from the European Union's member states. Between 1986 and 1996, the EC Childcare Network undertook a sustained programme of cross-national work on a range of issues concerning the reconciliation of employment and caring for children, which included many projects on services for children up to 10 years. I offer these targets as one perspective on how policy might develop in this area, based on one set of values and political objectives, as a basis for discussion.

The second part of the paper consists of an account of staffing in centre-based early childhood services in six 'case' countries: this part provides some detailed material to illustrate the general points made in Part One. The six countries selected for special attention are: Denmark, France, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. I have selected them because they illustrate most of the range of diversity that I will outline in Part One. However in an important

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[1]By 'early childhood services' I refer to all formal services outside the child's home providing care, education or family support for children from birth to compulsory school age and their parents; these include what OECD refers to as 'early childhood education and care services' (ECEC). The term excludes informal services provided by relatives and friends, although it should be recognised that such services are widespread in many societies and raise issues, for example of support and cost, that merit attention in any comprehensive study of early childhood services.

respect the choice is skewed. Five of the six countries have integrated responsibility for all early childhood services within one system and one Government Department (all, with the exception of Denmark, within education). In fact, the history, process and extent of integration in practice varies considerably, from the recent and very partial integration in Britain to long-standing and total integration of services, but within the social welfare system, in Denmark.

However, I also recognise that in the Minority World as a whole, split systems of early childhood services (split as between education and welfare systems) are more common than integrated systems, whether already achieved or being worked towards. The inclusion of only one country - France - with a split system therefore may give a misleading impression of how things are internationally. My justification for my skewed choice of 'case' countries is that it seems to me that the issue of whether systems should be split or integrated is central to any consideration of early childhood services, and that it is therefore of particular interest and importance to consider the possible implications of moving to an integrated system for the structuring of the workforce, including education and training.

These six country cases focus on centre-based provision, including in schools. I have therefore taken 'family day care in the European Union' (that is, care provided by an individual worker in her own home) as a seventh case, although I suspect I have not been able to do justice to this area in the short space available.

1.2 The rationale for cross-national work

What is often difficult to encompass in cross-national studies are the historical, cultural and political ideas that underpin early childhood services, and which produce very different understandings or constructions of young children and their relationship to family and society, of early childhood services themselves and therefore of early childhood workers. For example, the following quotation about Scandinavian childhood suggests an understanding of children that is probably very different to that found in many other countries:

> Most children now spend many hours a day in group care....The dramatic Scandinavian experiment in changing children's childhoods has promoted rethinking about inter-relationships between the triangle of parents, children and the state. Traditional formulations have thought of children mainly in relation to parents, with the state as a back-up; but Scandinavian policy now has an altered focus: children are a shared responsibility of the state and parents. Under these circumstances, it is appropriate to think of children's own direct relationships with the state, its policies and goals. In addition, concern for social justice and the rights of the individuals in these countries has led to a movement to regard children and parents as independent subjects with separate legal status. Thus the stage has been set for extracting children out from under the family, conceptually, and thinking about them, not only as individuals, but also, more widely, as a social group (Mayall, 1996: 56).

This raises an important question: what is the purpose of cross-national comparisons with respect to a subject such as early childhood education and care services? Or, put another way, what can we learn from such an exercise? This seems a critical question for two reasons. First, there is an increasing interest in cross-national work, reflected in a rapidly growing literature comparing early childhood services in different countries. Second, there is an increasing tendency to refer

to research from a variety of countries in support of particular conclusions, with American research being most frequently cited both because of the power of the English language and the quantity and (within its particular paradigm) quality of American research. Cross-national comparisons however need to be approached with great care, because of the enormous differences in context, not only at the structural level but also at the less tangible but more profound level of understanding and construction.

It might be argued that context can be treated as an independent variable that can, in some way, be described and controlled for. This idea that context can be separated out and its effect independently measured requires a conceptualisation of context as "that which surrounds". But this conceptualisation has been problematised as a reductionist simplification; an alternative conceptualisation, "context as that which weaves together", precludes the possibility of separating context out as an independent variable (Cole, 1996). In psychology this has meant, for example, a move from looking at culture as an independent variable affecting cognition, to regarding cognitive processes as inherently cultural (Rogoff and Chavajay, 1995). Applied to the study of early childhood institutions, this perspective would mean recognising that these institutions are similarly inherently cultural - inextricably interwoven with culture as well as the other strands which make up context.

To recognise the irreducibly contextualised nature of early childhood services - their embeddedness in a particular time and place and within a particular web of relationships - does not, however, mean that cross-national work is futile. Far from it. The work presented in this paper, comparing early childhood workers in different countries, or indeed the work presented in other cross-national reports provides one means of deepening our understanding of how and why early childhood services and practices develop in the way they do, and therefore for problematising and analysing the situation in every country. We may not wish to say that the situation in Country A is better or worse that in Country B, nor advocate the transfer of the system from Country A to Country B. But Country A may provide a prism or lens for looking at Country B. Adopting a Foucauldian perspective, cross-national work can help us to 'think differently' and therefore critically: the lens of Country A may make it easier to see in Country B what is uncritically taken for granted and make the invisible visible and the familiar strange, so enabling dominant assumptions, discourses and constructions in Country B to be questioned. And this in turn carries the potential for change since, in Foucault's words, "as soon as one can no longer think things as one formerly thought them, transformation becomes both very urgent, very difficult and quite possible".

I am wary of the idea that 'models' or 'programmes' in one country can be exported to another, taking seriously Carlina Rinaldi's warning that there cannot be a 'Reggio programme' because "the identity of our [early childhood services] is based on concepts and values, we do not offer a recipe, nor a method, our work is not to be copied because values can only be lived not copied". But in addition to generating critical questions, cross-national studies can enable us to see the big picture, including broad trends in policy and service delivery, for example, in early childhood, the increasing number of countries with an integrated early childhood service. We may then reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of adopting a different approach in our own country (e.g. moving from a split system to an integrated system) - but if we decide to do so, then the process and content of reform will need to be determined by the local situation.

1.3 Different paradigms

Many years of working cross-nationally and with colleagues in other countries have also raised another question that I find very important: are we speaking the same language? By language I do not mean whether we are speaking English, French, Spanish or whatever. I mean instead do we share a common framework of understanding, indeed do we recognise the possibility of there being more than one true way of talking about, for example, early childhood services.

At one level it is literally a matter of vocabulary. Do we choose to speak about early childhood in the same way? In a recent book, Gunilla Dahlberg, Alan Pence and myself (1999) began by noting an increasingly dominant vocabulary in the early childhood field, "a language with its own particular vocabulary and which produces a particular type of conversation and question": promoting development; ensuring readiness to learn and readiness for school; enhancing school performance; early intervention for children deemed to be in need; developmentally appropriate practice and desirable outcomes; models and programmes; and most pervasive of all, the language of quality. The rest of the book was about

> the possibilities for talking about early childhood differently, using a different language, having different conversations, asking other questions. We have talked about the rich child, the co-constructing child, the child as citizen; the early childhood institution as a forum in civil society, with possibilities for many and varied projects, a place for children and childhood; about meaning making and pedagogical documentation and generative curricula; about power and freedom; about dialogue, confrontation and reflection; about plurality, singularity, uncertainty and contingency; about the ethics of an encounter and relating to the Other (185-6)

But the idea of different languages also captures the possibility of different perspectives, different meanings, different paradigms, in short that there are different ways of thinking about and understanding issues, different ways of 'doing' early childhood work. Early childhood services in Britain (and probably the US) are situated within a particular way of understanding the world - what some might call 'modernist' or essentialist. They are dominated by a particular approach to research (a positivistic, 'empirical-analytic' paradigm) and a particular discipline, developmental psychology, which has been described as "a paradigmatically modern discipline" (Burman, 1994). Bloch (1992) refers to the "lack of recognition or acceptance of alternative theoretical and methodological perspectives in early childhood education" in the US, and suggests that one reason is "the century long domination of psychological and child development perspectives in the field of early childhood education".

The reason for raising this is not to dismiss the contribution of developmental psychology to early childhood, which seems to me to offer *an* important knowledge and perspective (although not the only ones). Nor am I implying that the US (and Britain) have no exponents of other paradigms; for example, as Bloch points out, US schools of education have developed a large body of research "using symbolic or interpretivist, critical, and most recently, post-modern paradigms", and have many distinguished researchers, such as Popkewitz, Cherryholmes, Giroux, Apple and Lather. What I am trying to suggest is that the discussion of early childhood, perhaps in particular at a cross-national level, needs to recognise that there are different paradigms of research, different theories, different understandings of and assumptions about

'knowledge', 'science', 'reality', 'the child', 'learning', 'evaluation', and so on - and needs to be willing (even enthusiastic) to explore and struggle to understand these differences. Otherwise the early childhood field risks unwittingly adopting a feature of much Western philosophy: "in its long history of desire for unity and the One...when knowledge or theory comprehends the Other, the alterity of the latter vanishes as it becomes part of the same" (Young, 1990: 13).

1.4 Some influences on this paper

In preparing this paper, I have drawn from three main areas of work I have undertaken over the last 10 years or so. First, this paper relies heavily on a background report written for OECD in 1998, one of several that were commissioned as a prelude to the OECD Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care currently nearing its conclusion. Second, as Coordinator of the EC Childcare Network between 1986 and 1996, I was in the privileged position of conducting a wide range of cross-national work with an excellent group of national experts, and which included a number of seminars and reports with direct bearing on staffing in early childhood services, including the question of gender. One consequence of that work for me has been increased awareness of the importance of gender as an issue in staffing (stimulated by a report on *Men as Workers in Childcare Services* by my Danish colleague, Jytte Juul Jensen (1996)).

I have been able to pursue this issue of gender in a third area of work. This has involved a three years study of the childcare workforce at the Thomas Coram Research Unit (TCRU), with projects focusing both on nursery workers and childminders, and including the publication of two books on gender and staffing (Owen et al., 1997; Cameron et al., 1999). If that work started with the question 'why are there so few men in early childhood services?', it has led to another and equally critical question - 'why are there so many women working in early childhood services?' Seeking to answer these questions leads to the heart of staffing in early childhood - what is the work? Who do we think the early childhood worker is? How does early childhood work differ from care in the home?

2. SOME ISSUES, QUESTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

2.1 The issue of the structure of the early childhood workforce: pedagogues, early childhood teacher or childcare worker/teacher mix

There are three basic 'models' for early childhood workers, at least in centre-based services:

1. *pedagogues*, trained to work with children from 0 to 6 or older in non-school settings and having an equally important but different role to the school-based teacher;
2. *early childhood teachers*, trained to work with children from 0 to 6 within the education system, and viewed as occupying one branch/specialism of the teaching profession;
3. *a mixture of teachers working with older children in the early childhood age range within the education system, and various types of 'child care' workers* employed in early childhood services in the welfare system.

The six case countries illustrate these different models of centre-based work, although always with some qualifications. The pedagogue is basically the model for Denmark and Sweden, although in both countries they can also be found working within the school system, for example in kindergarten or pre-school classes for 6 year olds in both countries (there is a movement across the Nordic countries to provide for 6 year olds in school, when previously they were provided for in non-school settings). In Sweden, as discussed in more detail in 2.6 below, pedagogues may also work in a team with school teachers in 'whole day schools' for 6 to 9 year olds, and there is also discussion about integrating at least part of the training for pedagogues and school teachers.

Both Nordic countries have substantial but diminishing groups of early childhood workers with lower levels of training than pedagogues or teachers. This is also the case in Spain and New Zealand, where the basic model adopted for an integrated early childhood system has been the early childhood teacher, although this worker is of more recent origin and still to achieve the dominant position across the whole early childhood age range of the pedagogue in Denmark and Sweden. Indeed the New Zealand case features a struggle to establish a three year 'early childhood education' course as the main and benchmark qualification across all services, following integration within education

Finally, France and Britain illustrate countries which retain a mixed staffing structure, with no emergent 'core' worker. In the case of France, the system remains split between welfare and education, and split staffing parallels the split system. In Britain, early childhood services are now all within education, but the change is recent and the major split between teachers and child care workers remains as it was beforehand, with no steps taken as yet to develop a new 'model' for early childhood work.

There are two other dimensions of the structuring of the workforce. First, there is the complexity of the workforce. Denmark has a very simple structure: a highly trained pedagogue and an untrained worker operating within a small range of types of centre providing full-day provision. At the other extreme, New Zealand has a complex structure due to a diversity of different types of services, some full day and some part day, and a plethora of qualifications.

Second, there is the age range of children with which workers are trained to work. In some cases, training covers the whole early childhood age range, but no more (cf. Spain and New Zealand). In other cases, it covers part of the early childhood range, and no more (cf. France or teachers in Britain). In yet other cases, training extends to include children of school age, although there is an important distinction here between (a) teachers who are trained to work with part of the early childhood age group (usually 3 and upwards) as well as primary school children (cf. Britain); and (b) some pedagogues who are trained to work across the whole childhood age range, from birth to 16 or older (cf. Denmark). (It should also noted that other policy areas can affect the age groups that early childhood workers work with. To take two examples: parental leave policies can affect the number of very young children in services, as for example in Sweden where public services have less than 200 children under 12 months of age; and school starting ages vary, from 6 in many Continental countries to 5 or less in Britain, Netherlands, Ireland and New Zealand).

The structuring of the early childhood workforce reflects the structure of early childhood education and care services, most important whether these services are in split or integrated systems. In some countries, early childhood education and care services are integrated within one system, located either within welfare or education, providing in effect a common framework. Integration has been a long-established feature of the Nordic countries, and virtually all features of services are integrated - not only administrative responsibility but also legislation, funding and costs to parents, regulations/standards (and usually curriculum) - and staffing. Consequently, as the cases of Denmark and Sweden show, one set of workers operate within one integrated system. The interesting development, to which I shall return in 2.6, is the recent transfer of responsibility for the integrated early childhood system in Sweden from welfare (where it is located in all other Nordic countries) to education.

In other countries, integration has been more recent and is not yet fully achieved. This is the case in New Zealand and Spain, each about a decade into the process of trying to achieve greater coherency, as they move from a split to an integrated system based in education. A start has been made, including the development of a new 'core' early childhood worker, an early childhood teacher qualified to work with children from 0 to 5 or 6. In Britain, administrative integration has only just occurred (in 1998), with little impact yet on staffing. An important question will be whether integration leads eventually to a new 0-5 or 6 early years worker, covering both 'childcare' and school-based services, and if so if this worker will be a pedagogue or a teacher.

In most countries, however, early childhood education and care services are split between two systems - the welfare system and the education system. In this case, services are located within one or other of two frameworks, leading to major differences in administrative responsibility, legislation etc. - and two quite different systems of staffing. This can be clearly seen in the case of France where there are two sets of workers operating in two systems, one welfare-based, the other education-based.

The 'models' of early childhood work have major implications for training, pay and status. Broadly speaking, pedagogues and teachers (including teachers in model 3) enjoy reasonably high levels of training and relatively good pay and conditions. Training in all cases is for at least 3 years at a post-18 level, often in universities or similar higher education institutions, and similar to or only slightly below the level for primary school teachers. The same applies to pay and other conditions; for example, in Sweden the average salary of pedagogues is 84% of the salary of a

teacher in grade 1-9 of compulsory school (Gunarrson et al., 1999).

Overall, where work in early childhood services has been fully integrated across the age ranges removing the welfare/education split (i.e. the Nordic countries), then this has been achieved at a high level; work with children under 3, which receives lower training, pay and status in split systems, is at the same level as work with children over 3 years of age. However, if we look at split systems (or, as in Britain and New Zealand, integrated systems where full integration has not yet been achieved in practice), with a mixed workforce - teachers and childcare workers - then that split is played out in greatly differing levels of training, pay, conditions and status for the two work groups: moreover, younger children generally have workers with lower levels of training, pay and status. For example, the case of Britain shows that teachers working with children under 5 have a 4 year, post-18 university level training, compared to childcare workers, for example in nurseries, where the most common training is a 2 year post-16 training below university level, with teachers earning far more than childcare workers. A similar picture emerges in the case of France: teachers in nursery schools (*école maternelle*), working with children aged 2 to 6, have a five year training at university level, compared to a one year post-16 training for the *auxiliare* working in nurseries with children under 3 (the *auxiliare* is also unlikely to be able to progress professionally since most nurseries are managed by nurses who have specialised in pediatric work (*puéricultrice*)).

We can also compare the *auxiliare* in France with her equivalent in Denmark working with children under 3. Not only does the Danish pedagogue have a 3.5 year post-18 training, which qualifies her to work with children under and over 3, but the Danish pedagogue earns twice as much. In 1995, using the Purchasing Power Standard (PPS), an international unit of cost which takes account of national differences in price levels, the starting salary for a Danish pedagogue was nearly twice that for a French *auxiliare*, PPS18,410 compared to PPS9,540 (EC Childcare Network, 1995).

Finally, it is clear that funding is critical to understanding existing workforce structures and future possibilities for change. Funding for early childhood services varies greatly between countries, including overall levels, the public/private mix, and methods of funding. However, it seems to be the case that the achievement of an integrated staffing structure based on higher levels of training and pay for workers across the 0-6 age range has only been achieved in the Nordic countries, where there is a high level of public subsidy paid direct to services. In a number of countries (such as Britain) a large proportion of the early childhood workforce are poorly trained and paid: indeed funding has been premised on this situation. This creates enormous difficulties about how to get from this situation to a situation more akin to that in Denmark and Sweden where most workers are well trained and paid (assuming of course that such a transition is desired): I shall return to this issue of transitions in 2.5.

2.2 The issue of the construction of the early childhood worker: who do we think the early childhood worker is?

But it is necessary to go beyond these structural issues to understand staffing in early childhood services, and the differences between countries. Education and training of early childhood workers and the structuring of the workforce itself cannot be divorced from fundamental questions about early childhood services and work, to which different countries (or groups within countries) do, and will, come up with different answers. What are the purposes of early childhood

institutions and the work they undertake? How do we conceptualise or construct the young child and the early childhood worker? How do we understand concepts such as care, knowledge and learning? What pedagogical theories and practices are chosen? There is too little space to explore these complex issues in any detail in this paper: they are discussed in much greater detail, for example in Dahlberg et al., 1999. In that book, working with social constuctionist theories, which have become very influential within the field of European childhood studies[2], different understandings of the child are distinguished: for example, the child as empty vessel and knowledge reproducer, the child as innocent, the child of nature or the scientific child of developmental psychology, and the child as co-constructor of knowledge in relation with other children and adults.

Developing this theme, it is also argued that there are very different understandings of early childhood institutions which presume very different constructions of the young child - and which produce very different understandings of the early childhood worker. To take two examples. They can be understood as places which produce child-related outcomes, in particular care and the reproduction by young children of pre-determined knowledge, identity and values: in the words of Lilian Katz (1993), the American early childhood expert, "early childhood programmes are increasingly in danger of being modelled on the corporate/industrial or factory model so pervasive in elementary and secondary levels of education.....factories are designed to transform raw material into prespecified products by treating it to a sequence of prespecified standard processes" (33-34). This idea of the early childhood institution is produced by constructions of the young child as an empty vessel or *tabula rasa (*needing to be 'made ready' to learn and for school*)* and as nature.

An alternative understanding of early childhood institutions is as public spaces in civil society where adults and children engage together in a variety of projects of social, cultural, political and economic significance, including pedagogical work which involves children and adults co-constructing knowledge, identities and values (Dahlberg *et al.*,1999). This understanding of the early childhood institution is produced by constructions of the young child as a citizen and co-constructor of knowledge and identity, summed up in the words of Loris Malaguzzi (1993), the first director of early childhood services in Reggio-Emilia until his death in 1993: "our image of the child is rich in potential, strong, powerful, competent and, most of all, connected to adults and other children" (10). This last reference is a reminder that the pedagogical theory and practice in Reggio adopts an explicitly social constructionist perspective.

The point about this is that social constructions, themselves constituted through discourse, are highly productive of pedagogical theory and practice - how people think and what they do. You cannot understand Reggio without, for example, understanding their constructions of the child and their idea of learning as a process of meaning making, foregrounding relationships, listening,

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[2]Prout and James (1990) observe that "Childhood is a social construction. Compared to biological immaturity, childhood is neither natural nor universal...The immaturity of children is a biological fact, the way in which that immaturity is understood and made meaningful is a fact of culture. The facts of culture vary making childhood a social institution. Childhood is constructed and reconstructed for and by children". For a further discussion of social constructionism and children see also James, Prout and Jenks (1998)

interpretation and negotiation. Furthermore these different understandings or constructions of the child and the early childhood institution, and of learning and pedagogy, produce very different constructions of the early childhood worker and what the work involves. This is reflected for example in the very different terminologies given to describe different groups of workers in different countries - pedagogue, teacher, educator, nursery nurse, childcare assistant and so on (and distinctions of meaning are at risk of being lost in an English-dominated world in which everything gets translated into English). Oberhuemer and Ulich (1997), in their review of staff training in the European Union, propose a number of different roles or constructions for early childhood workers, related to the purposes attached to early childhood institutions:

- as schoolteachers, in those countries (such as France) which train teachers to work with children from 3 or so through into primary school, where particular emphasis is placed on close relationships between nursery and primary school, with nursery school viewed very much in terms of preparing children for compulsory schooling;
- as early childhood specialists, in those countries (such as Spain) which train teachers or other workers to work with and across the whole early childhood age range; and
- as social network experts, especially in countries (such as Denmark and Sweden) whose training schemes "reflect an understanding of early childhood services as a framework both for educational work with children and for social support for families where the chief caregivers work or study....[I]nstitutions for children of preschool age are often seen to have a multipurpose role and are viewed as an integral part of the community infrastructure, liaising where necessary with local organisations and services and open to the needs of both children and parents" (21)

Dahlberg et al (1999) have suggested fundamentally different understandings of the early childhood worker in relation to learning. They contrast (a) the idea of the worker as a technician, a transmitter of predetermined knowledge and culture to the child, and a facilitator of the child's development ensuring that each milestone is reached and that the child's activities are appropriate to his or her stage of development; with (b) the idea that the worker is a co-constructor of knowledge and culture, both the children's and their own, in a pedagogy that "denies the teacher as neutral transmitter, the student as passive and knowledge as immutable material to impart" (Lather, 1991:15). Other understandings or constructions of the early childhood worker include as a substitute parent, providing a close, intimate relationship with the children in her charge; as an entrepreneur, marketing and selling her product and managing the institution to ensure high productivity and conformity to standards, in short an efficient production process; and as a researcher and learner (a concept very strong in Reggio) seeking to deepen understanding of what is going on and how children learn, through documentation, dialogue, critical reflection and deconstruction.

Another dimension of how early childhood workers are understood concerns position and power. Centre staff in many countries are organised hierarchically, with a manager at the top and two or more tiers below. However in parts of some countries (such as Italy, Spain and Sweden), the staff group work as a collective, with no difference of status. Obviously such differences are organisational, but they also reflect different value systems and create different ways of working and different discourses (for example, discussions about 'leadership' may make less sense to a system of services premised on collective working).

Before leaving the subject, there is a more general point I would like to make, lining back to an

earlier observation. Adopting a social constructionist (or non-essentialist) perspective attaches importance to a political and ethical dimension in early childhood. For it assumes there are choices to be made - about our understandings and image of the child, about the purposes of services, about the theory and practice of early childhood work - which may be informed by but cannot depend on scientific knowledge and technical processes.

2.3 The issue of gender: why are there so few men workers...or why are there so many women?

Early childhood work is one of the most highly gendered of occupations. In all countries where information exists, the work is overwhelmingly undertaken by women and where men are employed it is usually one (or two) in an otherwise female environment. In general, this issue receives little attention at a practice and policy issue (two notable exceptions are Norway which has set a target of 20% male workers in early childhood services; and Danish colleges which have developed a campaign to recruit men to train as pedagogues (Owen et al., 1998)). To the degree the issue is discussed, there seem to be (at least) two response: a general enthusiasm for more men in the Nordic countries; and a more ambivalent Anglo-American attitude which counterposes a case for more men against strong concerns about risks to children.

The work we have done on the subject at TCRU has led us to conclude that the gendered nature of employment in early childhood services - the large numbers of women as much as the small numbers of men - is an important issue for several reasons. First, because it seems to us that the gendered nature of the work both reflects and reinforces understandings of the work, in particular as substitute mothering and as something women are innately equipped to do (the same applies to care for adults): "resistance to men workers is, at least in part, a product of constructing the work as something women are 'naturally' good at, while men are 'unnaturally' suited to the work" (Cameron et al., 1999). Taking the question of gender seriously and openly is one way into a deeper discussion about what the work is and what qualities it requires. For example, one interesting debate in Norway, led by some male pedagogues, has been whether there are feminine and masculine ways of caring. Second, the current invisibility of gender, not just for staff but also often in relation to children and parents, precludes an important area of practice and reflection on practice. Having men and women working in services, combined with opportunities for pedagogical documentation, together with dialogue and reflection on practice, would make gender more visible, less taken for granted, and might promote attention being paid to this important dimension of diversity.

Our work has also made us question some common assumptions. For example, that a main reason for men not working in early childhood is poor pay and conditions (levels of male employment are still low in the Nordic countries despite higher levels of pay); that men are needed in early childhood as 'role models' (which assumes a uni-dimensional idea of masculinity); that employing men workers will attract more fathers to visit and participate in services (men workers are likely to put off as many fathers as they encourage, and the involvement of fathers should be seen as part of a general policy and practice addressing gender); and that child protection and employing men are linked (we think the two issues of recruiting men workers and protecting children and workers are both important and should be addressed, but should be separated out).

In the long term, the issue of recruiting men workers may well come to the fore due to increasing

problems of recruiting early childhood workers (and other care workers) from women only, especially as other employment opportunities for women increase. But we also believe there are other reasons for taking steps to more mixed gender workforces: "demonstrating diversity in the workforce to children through the visibility of men and women both as categories and in their infinite variety, alongside the visibility of people of colour, is an important goal for enhancing the quality of childcare, and could lead...to re-examining how, and for what purpose, caring work is conducted" (Cameron et al., 1999).

2.4 The issue of staff:child ratios: how many early childhood workers do we need?

In 1994, TCRU was asked by the British Government to review recommended staff: child ratios in a range of countries, as well as the English-language research literature on the subject (McGurk, Mooney, Moss & Poland, 1995). This year we have been asked to repeat the exercise, this time also including French, Spanish, and German-language literature, as well as literature from the Nordic countries.

A number of conclusions emerge from these exercises. First, there seems to be considerable difference in the research interest shown in this issue. Initial feedback from our current research review suggests little German, French or Spanish language literature, but a substantial amount from the US: in other words, ratios seem to figure more prominently in the US than in some other countries. Second, some countries have no regulations on ratios for some or all of their services: this is most common in respect of family day care, but also occurs in some cases for full day care in group settings. A lack of guidance does not by itself imply an under-developed service with poor staffing levels: for example, Denmark and Sweden have extensive systems of publicly supported services without any national regulations, with staffing issues determined locally (see national cases in Part Two). Third, where national or regional regulations or guidance do exist, there are considerable variations. In Part Two, for example, it can be seen that Britain recommends the highest national staff ratios (i.e. fewer children per member of staff) for children under 3 (1:3), Spain the lowest (1: 8 for under 12 month olds, 1:13 for 1 year olds and 1:20 for 2 year olds), with New Zealand and France in between (although it should be noted that in Spain, ratios are higher in some regions, which have the power to set higher standards). Finally, in general, ratios are higher the younger the age of the child, and in split systems tend to be higher in services in the welfare system than in the education system.

Determining the 'right' ratio is complicated for two main reasons. The first concerns how ratios are defined and was discussed in the first TCRU review:

> Is [the ratio] the total number of full-time equivalent staff? Or is it the number of staff supposed to be working with children at any given time or at certain key times in the daily routine? There will be little or no difference between these two definitions when the working hours of staff coincide with the opening hours of the service. But where there is a difference...there will be a difference between the two measures of ratio.
>
> An additional complication [arises where] in some cases a substantial proportion of working hours is specifically allocated to work *not* involving direct contact with children, such as in-service training, work preparation, contact with parents. For example, workers in publicly-supported services in parts of Italy and Spain can allocate 6 hours out of a 36-

hour week; while workers in publicly supported services in Germany can allocate about 20% of their working time to preparing their work.

> A further way of defining ratios is in terms of what actually happens in practice - the number of staff and children together in the same space either at a given point of time or averaged out over a period. This approach takes account of 'missing' children (due to unfilled places and absences for illness and other reasons) and 'missing' staff (due to absenteeism arising from illness and other unplanned reasons, and staff vacancies due to turnover and recruitment problems) (McGurk et al., 1995: 7-8).

Staff:child ratios therefore can be defined or calculated in a variety of ways. But judgements on the adequacy of ratios, however calculated, are culturally and socially determined, coming back to constructions or understandings of who the early childhood worker is and related considerations of pedagogical philosophy and practice. Three examples can serve to illustrate this point. First, the classic cross-national study of *Preschool in Three Cultures* (Tobin, Wu & Davidson, 1989) contrasted attitudes to ratios in the US - 'where the smaller the class size and the smaller the student/teacher ratio the better' - and in Japan, where typical ratios in kindergartens with 4 and 5 year olds were 1:30 yet Japanese teachers and administrators preferred this level of staffing:

> In Japan, the worlds of preschool and home, of teacher and mother, are viewed as largely discontinuous....[Low ratios] keep teachers from being too mother-like in their interactions with students...Large class sizes and large ratios have become increasingly important strategies for promoting the Japanese values of groupism and selflessness (Tobin, Wu & Davidson, 1997: 539, 541-3).

Similar contrasts have been observed in Europe. Singer (1993) talks about 'attachment pedagogy', the idea that mother care is needed for secure development and that, in its absence, non-maternal care requires to be modelled on a dyadic mother-child relationship. Not only do these pedagogical ideas reinforce the gendered nature of early childhood work, they also support high ratios, especially with younger children, and linked to individualistic approaches to working with children. Thus nurseries in Britain have substantially higher staff ratios for work with children under 3 than, say, nurseries in Italy and Spain. A comparison between nurseries in the three countries (Penn, 1997) emphasised how the staffing structures (including relatively high numbers) in the British nurseries encouraged staff to see themselves as individuals rather than, as in Spain and Italy, also as part of a group, sharing and working towards common objectives. In Britain,

> there was little sense of the children as a group able to influence or to help each other, and in general the organizational format of the nurseries would make it difficult to achieve, even if it was considered a worthwhile objective. The overall objective was instead the surveillance and monitoring of individual children to make sure they did not come to harm...In so far as any theoretical assumptions underpinned the approach to children in the UK nurseries, it was that....emotional security, and therefore learning, only takes place in a one to one adult-child relationship, and all other situations are irrelevant. The contribution of the peer group is completely disregarded (ibid.:52,53).

Thus although Penn noted variations between nurseries in both Italy and Spain, she judged the pedagogical work to be of a much higher standard in the nurseries in these countries than in the British nurseries, despite the former having fewer staff than the latter.

This leads me on to my third example, again drawn from Italy. Loris Malaguzzi, the first director of the early childhood services in Reggio, expressed part of his pedagogical theory when he spoke of 'a pedagogy of relationships' and of 'children as pedagogues'. He viewed the group of children as fundamental to learning, with the pedagogue as co-constructor and facilitator, rather than transmitter or substitute parent:

> Interaction among children is a fundamental expereince during the first years of life. Interaction is a need, a desire, a vital necessity that each child carries within...Children's self learning and co-learning, supported by interactive experiences constructed with the help of adults, determine the selection and organization of processes and strategies that are part of and coherent with the overall goals of early childhood education...Constructive conflicts transform the individual's cognitive expereince and promote learning and development. Placing children in small groups facilitates this process because among children there are not strong relationships of authority and dependence; therefore, such conflicts are more attractive and advantageous (Malaguzzi, 1993: 11-12)

I found evidence of similar thinking and practice when last year I visited some nurseries, for children aged 6 months to 3 years, in a small local authority in Tuscany. I spoke at some length with the *pedagogista* (pedagogical consultant) who worked with these nurseries. She emphasised the critical importance of the group of children, in the pedagogical philosophy and practice of the nurseries:

> Nurseries are places where children can be with children. We place a very high importance on the relationships between and among children. During the first few months [at nursery - children are admitted at one time each year], the group is created, takes shape. The group gets its own structure...The experiences each child has becomes the experience of the whole group...Each child makes a contribution to the history of the group, each child brings something to the group and the group helps each child build her identity - difference and solidarity...Pedagogy mainly occurs through the group, the nursery is a place for social groups....The children here learn in the sense of constructing knowledge in relation with other children and adults. In school, learning is predefined, given. Here, it is important that the individual develops as a result of interaction, it is important *not* to receive information and knowledge from someone who knows more.

This pedagogical approach produced a particular understanding of the early childhood worker:

> The educator is the mediator of the relations (within the group). The adult has a high capacity to draw children's attention to herself, so we try not to draw attention on us, but leave children to have experiences among themselves...We must redefine the role of the educator so the potentialities of children are helped to come out. The educator does not violate the environment of children - but is not absent. She follows the children, but not to intervene, there but not being there, she observes but does not try to intervene, she lets the children act, be together...There are two strong images - the mother and the teacher.

> In our nurseries, we are creating a third image, the educator, someone who is also developing with the children, also learning, with a professionalism that is evolving, not fixed, never ending.

The emphasis on the group of children and children as active learners and pedagogues, and on early childhood workers as facilitators of the group makes sense of what (in British terms at least) were low staff ratios averaging 1 adult to 6 children under 3 years (or 1 adult to 8 children where there were no children under 12 months). Moreover, in conversation with a group of early childhood workers, there was no support for increasing ratios (i.e. having more adults), but rather a consensus that existing ratios were adequate and suited to the pedagogical work.

A few final points should be made about this expereince. First, all the staff I spoke to expressed high job satisfaction, and there was a low level of turnover. This contributed to very strong group relationships and, indeed, to cooperative working with no hierarchy. Second, the staff were highly supported in their work, not only by the *pedagogista*, but also through having 6 hours 'non contact' time out of their 36 hour week available for preparation, and for documentation involving discussion, confrontation and reflection. Third, there was a shared and strong commitment to a pedagogical philosophy and practice which emphasised the importance of group working, both for children and adults.

None of this is to argue in favour of low ratios *per se*. Rather, the argument of this section has been that the staff numbers, like all other aspects of staffing, should ultimately be a product of how we choose to understand young children, their institutions and the pedagogical work and other projects undertaken within these institutions. While there are technical issues, and complex ones, they have to be decided within an ethical and political framework.

2.5 Getting from here to there

Although countries are taking a variety of different routes, there is a widespread movement towards longer and higher level basic training for early childhood workers. Denmark, Sweden, Spain and New Zealand have all settled on a post-18 training of at least three years as the main or 'benchmark' training for workers *across the early childhood age range* (i.e. from 0 to 5 or 6); in all these cases, this training is similar to or not much lower than training for teachers in primary schooling. In France, there have been improvements in the training for teachers in *écoles maternelles* (who are also trained to work in primary schools) to the point where these teachers now have the highest formal academic level of training of any early childhood workers.

What distinguishes Denmark and Sweden from the other four case study countries is that these Scandinavian countries have reached a stage of having a workforce for the whole early childhood age range where most members are relatively well trained (with relatively satisfactory pay and employment conditions). In contrast, the other four countries still have substantial numbers of early childhood workers who have low levels of training and relatively poor pay and conditions. The question of how to get *to* a well trained and well paid workforce *from* a low base-line is a major issue for a number of reasons.

First and foremost there is the problem of funding. Good training costs, and well trained staff might expect higher earnings than staff with little or no training. As already noted, without substantial and sustained public funding, as occurs in Denmark and Sweden, this is a difficult

problem to resolve, if not impossible, since the only alternatives are either for early childhood workers to subsidize improved training through paying the costs from their own pocket and accepting below-average wages for their level of education and training or to pass the costs on to parents through increased fees. (This is also one reason why issues of standards, credentialing and regulation seem to figure so high on the American agenda, as means of cajoling a market system to improve its performance; but hardly appear on the agenda in countries like Denmark and Sweden, where public funding enables and requires uniformly high staffing standards without jeopardising affordability).

Second, there is the issue of the position of existing members of the workforce during a transition period during which new and/or upgraded training are being introduced. Are they to be left behind, fated to occupy second class jobs for the rest of their working lives? Or is there some way to offer them access to new qualifications, in a way that takes some recognition of their existing training and work experience? Both New Zealand and Spain have attempted to offer some special arrangements for this group and it should not prove an insuperable problem, if there is commitment to improve qualifications, if there are sufficient incentives to encourage existing staff to take further training, if there is adequate resourcing to enable retraining and if there is a carefully judged timescale - although all these are, in practice, as the experience of New Zealand shows, big 'ifs'.

Third, upgrading training, and increasing the status of early childhood work, may cut off an important area of employment opportunities to people (at present, mainly women) with low educational qualifications, but often with a lot of experience with children and considerable potential. In short, the process of professionalisation can serve to make early childhood work more exclusive, to the potential disadvantage of many women and children. At one level, it is difficult to see how this can be avoided; early childhood training and work should not be kept at a low level for these reasons. On the other hand, there are ways in which training can be made more open and inclusive. Denmark takes a relatively mature intake of students and places some weight on prior experience of work with children; there are therefore opportunities for those who did not do so well academically at school. Modular training courses, which enable workers to go at their own pace and to their own choice of level, may also be important.

Competence-based qualifications might also have a role to play. However, this is a very contentious area, involving different understandings of early childhood work, with many people arguing that a competency-based approach to qualifications is incompatible with a conception of the early childhood worker as a reflective and critical practitioner. It has been argued that "the crux of the debate is whether those people who work with young children in early childhood programmes are just competent technicians or reflective teachers and practitioners" (May, 1996). Another protagonist in this debate in New Zealand, Margaret Carr (1993), has contrasted the 'competency model' with what she calls the 'teacher change model', which she defines as to do with teaching pedagogical understandings that she argues are an essential part of the process towards the training of practitioners who are ongoing critical thinkers as they work with children.

2.6 Relationship between the staffing of early childhood services and other services for children

Most early childhood workers are trained to work only with young children, indeed some as already noted only work with a sub-group of young children (e.g. children under 3, or children

over 3). But some are also trained to work with school-age children. The example of teachers in Britain and France has already been mentioned, qualified to work with the upper age range of young children and the younger age range of school-age children. In Denmark, the pedagogue is qualified to work across a range of services for children, both of school age and younger (including nurseries, kindergartens, age integrated centres, free-time centres for school children and residential homes), and indeed with adults (for example, some work with elderly people).

A particularly interesting development is occurring in Sweden. The importance of Sweden lies not just in quantity of provision and consequent accessibility. It also lies in the way it is reorganising and rethinking its policy and provisions for children in new and challenging ways. From the beginning of the 1990s, many Swedish local authorities responded to greater decentralization and autonomy by reorganising services, to bring responsibility for pre-schools, schools and free-time services into one department. These local initiatives were followed in 1996 by central government, which incorporated responsibility for all of these services within the Ministry of Education and Science (which takes charge of policy) and the National Agency for Education (which takes charge of administration); prior to this early years and free-time services were the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs and the National Board of Health and Social Welfare. At around the same time, while compulsory school age remained at 7, local authorities were required to make provision in school for those 6 year olds whose parents wanted them to attend. For 6 year olds, therefore, there are now free pre-school classes, used by 95% of the age group, available usually for 3 hours a day, with children attending free-time provision for the rest of the day.

In sum, then, early years and free-time provision for school-age children now fall within the education system, alongside schools, and all are viewed as engaged with children's learning. Integration at the administrative levels has also supported the integration of services within schools. 'Whole day schools', which integrate school classes (either the first grades of compulsory school on their own or integrated with pre-school classes), with free-time services are increasingly widespread. This in turn is leading to new relationships between and roles for different staff groups, in particular the pre-school teachers (*förskollärare*), the school teachers and the free-time pedagogues (*fritidspedagog*). Staff teams made up from each profession increasingly work with 6 to 9 year olds in 'whole day schools' (*barnskola).* Heads of education districts (*rektors),* with responsibility for a range of pre-school, school and free-time services, may be school teachers by training - but they may also be pre-school teachers or free-time pedagogues.

Last but not least, because of the reforms and increasingly close team working by members of the three main staffing groups, there has been growing discussion in Sweden about the future of staffing, with some even arguing for a single profession of pedagogue (with specialisation) covering preschool, school, and free-time. Although parity does not already exist between the training and working conditions of school teachers on the one hand, and *förskollärare* and *fritidspedagog* on the other hand, the differences are not so great as to provide a major impediment to greater integration. A parliamentary committee commissioned to look into teacher training, which reported in July 1999, did not recommended a single profession, but proposed instead a substantial overlap in training:

> *"Pre-school (0-5 years), pre-school classes (6 year olds), schools (7-19 years),*

fritidsshem (free-time work) and adult education require teachers who can complement each other and work in partnership in order to develop the work being done and to meet the goals set. What is needed then is a teacher training that educates a variety of different types of teacher partly with a common core of knowledge and partly with many different knowledge profiles"

The recommendations of this all-party committee form the basis of government proposals for the reform of training which, if accepted, will be introduced in Autumn 2001. The proposed new training system will cover pre-school teachers/pedagogues, free-time pedagogues and teachers across the whole school age range. Training will last for between 3.5 to 5 years, with all students sharing a common core of 1.5 years of training: this will concentrate on an interdisciplinary approach to the values and aims of the learning process, including philosophical, psychological and sociological understandings. In addition to this shared training, students will specialise in relation both to the type of work they wish to do (e.g. early years, school, free-time pedagogy) and subject areas. The extent of specialisation will determine the final length of the training. An important objective is that students should not have to decide their specialisms before starting to train, but can decide during their training; another important objective is to support team work, between for example preschool teachers, free-time pedagogues and school teachers. All students will end their training with the qualification of teacher, with their certificates indicating their areas of specialisation. Parity will be achieved across all services for children and young people from birth to 18+, and between school teachers, *förskollärare* and *fritidspedagog*.

Another 'getting from here to there' issue concerns how it might be possible to promote a more mixed gender workforce. While doubtful that rapid change is possible, in our recent work at TCRU, we have identified a number of steps that might be taken, including setting targets for the recruitment of men students and workers; developing recruitment strategies that recognise diversity; seeking to concentrate men workers in a few centres; making gender visible within institutions and developing reflexive practice; and rethinking the nature of the work (Cameron et al., 1999). Jensen (1999) in her discussion paper also sets out a range of measures, to be taken at different levels and by different agencies, that might promote more gender diverse staffing.

2.7 Family day care

Although the preceding discussion has been about centre-based workers, it is important to remember the critical role played in many countries by family day carers. Focusing on the case of the European Union, the structure of family day care varies between countries, for example according to whether or not family day carers work within organised schemes, i.e. are recruited, employed and paid by public or private organisations (cf. Denmark, France, Sweden), or operate as independent, self-employed providers (cf. Britain).

Family day carers have very varying backgrounds. Levels of education vary and most will not have any formal early childhood training or qualifications. No European country requires a special training before a person can start work as a family day carer. Family day care therefore raises very difficult and acute issues concerning training. Should family day carers be excluded from early childhood training, apart from a few limited and very basic courses (*e.g.* First Aid)? Should a substantial but separate system of training be developed for them, geared to their particular needs and circumstances? Or should early childhood training be developed in such a way that it can encompass family day carers, alongside centre-based workers, in short creating

a common, basic training for all who want to work with children, albeit with some possibility of specialisation? At present, family day carers have little possibility of moving into other early childhood work, but with a common, basic training this would become more feasible, as would moving on to further training. Attention also needs to be given to the training of people who supervise and support family day carers. It has been argued that supervisors should be specially trained for this work and preferably have personal experience of working as family day carers themselves.

2.8 Some critical questions

- *Understandings and constructions.* How is early childhood work understood? What is the social construction of the early childhood worker? How do these understandings and constructions relate to constructions of the young child and early childhood institutions? Who do we think young children are? What do we think early childhood institutions are for? Who do we think early childhood workers are? Are they technicians, transmitters of knowledge, delivers of pre-specified programmes and precise curricula? Substitute parents/mothers? Co-constructors of knowledge, and reflective practitioners, critical thinkers and researchers about pedagogical practice?

- *Structure of services.* Should early childhood services be split or integrated? What are the implications of the structuring of early childhood services for the structuring of early childhood work? How are these different ways of structuring services and work justified?

- *Process of reform.* How can transition from a split to an integrated system, and from lower to higher levels of training best be managed in relation to the existing early childhood workforce?

- *Structuring of the workforce.* How should the workforce be constituted? Should it be based on the pedagogue, the teacher or some other model? Should there be mainly or wholly one type of worker or should there be a variety of different types of worker, including workers with different levels of training? If so, what should be the mix? And how should the roles of the different workers be defined?

- *Age ranges of children.* With what age range of children should workers be trained to work - 0 to 3, 3 to 6, 0 to 6, 0 to 18 or some other combination? What should be the relationship between workers in early childhood services and in services for school-age children, including schools and services providing care and recreation (for example, with respect to training, salary, job description, status)?

- *Basic training.* What should be the basic (benchmark) level of training for early childhood work? Should it be, as is increasingly the case, a three year (or longer) post-18 training? Is there a role for competency-based qualifications or should qualifications be based mainly or wholly on college or university-based courses?

- *Continuous training.* How much continuous training should early childhood workers receive? What are the purposes of continuous training? What forms of continuous training are needed? What conditions are required to facilitate continuous training?

- *Access to training*. Who pays for training, basic or continuous? What other conditions are needed to ensure the availability and access to training? How and over what period is it possible to get to a well trained workforce from a relatively low starting point?

- *Monitoring*. What information should be routinely collected on the early childhood workforce? How should this information be collected?

2.9 A Conclusion

As I said in my introduction, I want to offer one perspective on how policy might develop in this area of staffing. I am at pains to stress that this is *a* or *one* conclusion, because it takes the form of a set of proposals produced within a group in a particular context and based on one set of values and political objectives. I offer it therefore as a basis for discussion, rather than an assertion of what should be.

The proposals were produced by the EC Childcare Network and take the form of 40 quality targets for services for young children. The targets emerged from two developments. First, in 1992 the EU Council of Ministers (i.e. the member state governments) adopted a Recommendation on Child Care. This addressed measures needed to promote 'reconciliation of employment and family responsibilities', understood by the EU as a necessary condition for achieving its policy objective of gender equality in the labour market. Four types of measure were envisaged: leave arrangements, making the workplace more responsive to the needs of workers with children, supporting increased participation by men in the care of children; and the provision of services for children ('child care services'). With respect to these services, the Recommendation provides a number of specific objectives for the development of services for young children:

- affordability
- access to services in all areas, both urban and rural
- access to services for children with special needs
- combining safe and secure care with a pedagogical approach
- close and responsive relations between services and parents and local communities
- diversity and flexibility of services
- increased choice for parents
- coherence between different services

The Network took the view that such objectives require a number of conditions to be achieved, including:

- a policy framework for service provision
- coordination of responsibility for services
- a curricular framework
- appropriate staffing and staff conditions
- appropriate physical environments
- infrastructure for planning, monitoring, support, training, research and development;
- adequate financing of services and infrastructure

The purpose of the targets was "to propose criteria [referred to as 'targets']for assessing progress towards achieving the Recommendation's specific objectives and establishing the conditions which would enable their achievement...The report proposes targets that the Network believes could be realised throughout the European Union *within ten years*" (emphasis added).

The targets were also the product of five years work by the Network. They were drafted by the Spanish member of the Network (Irene Balaguer) and a British colleague (Helen Penn), in regular consultation with myself as Network Coordinator and the other members of the Network. It was a very collaborative and democratic exercise, which built upon earlier work by the Network, in particular a European seminar in Barcelona in 1990, and a subsequent discussion paper - *Quality in Services for Young Children* - published in 1991, translated into all main EU languages and widely distributed. The targets emerged from the ideas in the earlier discussion paper, but also its approach to quality. A number of clear assumptions therefore underlay the Network's approach to quality:

- quality is a relative concept, based on values and beliefs
- defining quality is a process and this process is important in its own right, providing opportunities to share, discuss and understand values, ideas, knowledge and experience
- the process should be participatory and democratic, involving different groups including children, parents and families and professionals working in services
- the needs, perspectives and values of these groups may sometimes differ
- defining quality should be seen as a dynamic and continuous process, involving regular review and never reaching a final, 'objective' statement[3].

The Network was at pains to emphasise that the targets were "not an attempt to prescribe universal standards or systems across Europe...The Network hopes that the report stimulates discussion, sets testing but realistic challenges and supports the process of defining objectives and setting targets".

The targets are contained in a report of the EC Childcare Network (1996c). The report was again translated into the (now) 9 working languages of the EU and widely distributed. In the report, the 40 targets are divided into 10 areas of blocks (Policy; Finance; Levels and Types of services; Education: Staff Child Ratios; Staff Employment and Training: Environment and health; Parents and Community; and Performance). Each bloc in the report, in addition to the relevant targets, contains an introductory discussion, outlining the rationale for the targets, together with examples of how each target has been realised in at least one EU member state.

The targets are seen as inter-dependent, and not therefore to be taken in isolation. However for the sake of space I shall present only those bearing directly on staffing, while encouraging those who are interested to consult the full report. The main point to be emphasised is that the staffing is based on achieving an integrated and coherent early childhood service, combining care and education, for children aged 0 to 6 years, and sets a financial target of public expenditure on

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[3] I have explored these assumptions further with colleagues in an edited book (Moss & Pence, 1994), while Dahlberg, Moss & Pence (1999) develops a critique of the concept of quality and explores alternative concepts for evaluating pedagogucal work.

these services being not less than 1% of GDP (equivalent to about a fifth of existing public education budgets in EU member states).

The staffing targets are as follows:

Target 21: staff ratios for collective care should reflect the objectives of the service and their wider context and be directly related to age and group size. They should usually be more than, but should not be less than, 1 adult: 4 places for children under 12 months; 1 adult : 6 places for children aged 12-23 months; 1 adult : 8 places for children aged 24-35 months; 1 adult : 15 places for children aged 36 - 71 months. Ratios in family day acre should not be less than 1 adult : 4 places for children under compulsory school age and the ratio should include the family day carer's own children.

Target 22 : at least one tenth of the working week should be non-contact time allocated to preparation and continuous training.

Target 23 : adequate supply cover should be available to maintain the ratios

Target 24 : administrative, domestic, janitorial work should be allocated staff time or hours in addition to those spent with children

Target 25 : all qualified staff employed in services should be paid at not less than a nationally or locally agreed wage rate, which for staff who are fully trained should be comparable to that of teachers

Target 26: a minimum of 60% of staff working directly with children in collective settings should have a grant eligible basic training of at least three years at post-18 level, which incorporates both the theory and practice of pedagogy and child development. All training should be modular. All staff in services (both collective and family day care) who are not trained to this level should have right of access to such training included on an in-service basis.

Target 27 : all staff in services working with children (in both collective and family day care) should have the right to continuous in-service training.

Target 28 : all staff whether in the public or private sector should have the right to trade union affiliation.

Target 29 : 20% of staff employed in collective services should be men.

Target 36 : services should adopt employment procedures which emphasize the importance of recruiting employees who reflect the ethnic diversity of the local community.

3. SOME CASES: 6 COUNTRIES AND FAMILY DAY CARE

This section presents short accounts of the training and education of early childhood workers in centre-based services in six countries, together with a short overview of training and education of family day carers in a number of European countries. In most countries, family day carers represent a major group within the early childhood workforce, in particular with respect to children under 3 years. I have chosen to treat them separately because they raise some different education and training issues to centre-based workers, but also to ensure that this important group do not get lost sight of alongside centre-based staff who, in the pecking order of early childhood, tend to have higher status, better conditions and higher levels of training, as well as being physically more visible.

3.1 Denmark

The early childhood system

Compulsory school age is 7, but nearly all 6 year olds attend part-time 'kindergarten classes' in schools. Otherwise, all early childhood services for children below compulsory school age are integrated within one system, which is located within social welfare[4] with national responsibility residing with the Ministry of Social Affairs. This is a long-standing, well-established and almost universal system.

However, integration does not mean centralization. Responsibility for early childhood education and care services is very decentralized, both to the more than 200 local authorities and to individual centres, each with its own management board including a parent majority. This means, for example, that there are no national standards; instead, standards are determined locally, by the local authority often in negotiation with the trade unions. However, staffing levels tend to be rather similar, working out generally at 1 adult for 3 children under 3 years and 1 adult for every 6 children aged 3 to 6. Moreover, as noted below, most staff are trained pedagogues.

Provision is heavily publicly funded, with parents contributing on average about a fifth of total costs. At the end of 1997, 55% of children under 3 years attended publicly-funded services (the figure would be substantially higher if children at home with parents on maternity and parental level were excluded) and 88% of children aged 3 to 6[5] years (excluding attendance at kindergarten classes). Just over half of children under 3 years attend publicly-organised family day care, the remainder going either to day nurseries for children aged 0 to 3 or to age-integrated institutions taking children from 0 to 6 or older. Children over 3 are largely in centres - two-thirds

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[4]The location of early childhood services within the welfare system in Denmark should be seen in the context of what Esping-Andersen (1990) has defined as the Scandinavian model of the welfare state, with a commitment to redistribution, universality and high levels of benefits and services. Location within the welfare system therefore does not mean selective services targeted on particular groups of children, *e.g.* with working parents, from disadvantaged backgrounds or defined as 'at risk'.

[5]By '3 to 6' I mean from 36 months up to (but not including) 72 months. I have used the same approach in describing other age ranges, *e.g.* 1 to 3 is from 12 months up to (but not including) 36 months.

going to kindergartens (centres exclusively for children from 3 to 6) and a quarter going to age-integrated institutions (centres taking children from 0 to 6 or older) - with just 7% in organised family day care. In recent years, there has been a strong movement towards age-integrated centres, and away from nurseries and kindergartens. All services are open all year and on a full-day basis, reflecting the high employment rate among mothers and fathers.

Although early childhood education and care services in Denmark generally receive public funding, a substantial minority, around a third, are actually managed by private, non-profit organisations.

The structure of staffing

There are two types of worker in centre-based services: pedagogues and untrained staff. Nearly two-thirds of staff are pedagogues, and most untrained staff are gaining experience prior to training as pedagogues. Pedagogues are qualified to work across a range of services for children, both of school-age and younger, and indeed with adults: the training has been described as "qualifying graduates to work in many different fields, from 0 to 100". Although the pedagogue is seen as quite different to the school teacher, pay and conditions are almost similar.

Education and Training: basic

The pedagogue training in Denmark was reformed in 1992. Previously there had been three types of training: to work in kindergarten (with children aged 3 to 6); to work in recreation centres with school-age children; and to work in nurseries (with children under 3 years) or in residential care for children and adults with disabilities and problems. The reform integrated these three types of training into one, and increased the length of the course from 3 to 3.5 years. Training takes place in 32 specialised colleges - *pedagogue-seminarium* - which take from 400 to 1100 students; there are similar but separate higher education institutions for nurses, teachers, therapists etc. All are funded by the State (Ministry of Education), with free tuition, a monthly grant to students and the possibility of low interest loans. The reform has also been described as marking a change to a more university-like course, which places greater emphasis on students studying independently (although some college teachers are critical of this move since they value interaction between students and teachers as part of the training process).

The course covers pedagogical studies and psychology (30%), social studies and health education (20%), and communication, organisation and management (10%), but with greatest emphasis on arts and activity subjects (40%). There are three placements lasting 64 weeks. There are also possibilities to specialise once the course has begun.

There has been a big expansion in places to meet an increasing demand for staff from an expanding system of services. But despite this, demand for training far exceeds supply, reflecting the popularity of the new course and, it has been said, a new enthusiasm among young people for working with people. For example in 1997, there were 21,000 applications for 5,000 places. Moreover, although the minimum age for training is 18, there are few if any students as young as this; many applicants are relatively mature, and the average age of students is 27. Many start their training in their mid-20s after gaining experience as an untrained worker in early childhood services or in other jobs; colleges view work experience as an important admission criteria.

Another important trend has been the growth of male students. In 1995, the intake was 22% male,

reflecting a commitment and active recruiting campaign by colleges.

In 1997 a new type of training was introduced - pedagogical basic training - intended both for untrained workers in centres and for family day carers. The course varies in length depending on age and experience. Thus for young people starting after 10 years schooling, it lasts 1.5 years, while for those who already have experience of working with children (in centres or in family day care), the course lasts one year. The course is also recognised in terms of progressing to other types of training, and local authorities will pay for people taking the course.

Education and Training: continuous

There are a wide range of short courses on offer by local authorities, colleges, trade unions, private organisations, in effect a large market of training opportunities from which individual centres can make choices. In the decentralized Danish system, centres often hold training budgets for staff, although in smaller local authorities the budget may be held at the local authority level. Attendance at courses has increased in recent years, and although there are no precise figures, it seems likely that staff may go to at least 2 or 3 days of training a year.

In addition, there are possibilities for pedagogues to take a diploma programme in pedagogical work (*Diplomuddannelsen I Pædagogisk Arbejde*). The diploma is roughly equivalent to a Batchelor's degree, and with this qualification pedagogues can go on to further studies at the level of a master's degree. The course is in three parts - the theory of science and method; study of a specialist subject; and a thesis - and can be taken full-time, when it lasts a year, or part-time, when it lasts 2½ years. The aim of this diploma course is "to qualify the students to combine scientific analysis and method with practical development of pedagogical activities in order that they acquire high level qualifications related to different pedagogical tasks".

Until recently, pedagogues and teachers shared the same administration and buildings for their diploma programmes, although otherwise they had little in common. But since 1997 there is now a separate Danish School of Advanced Pedagogy *(Danmarks Pædagoghøjskole)*. This is a national institution with regional university-based centres in Copenhagen, Aalborg, Aarhus, Esbjerg and Odense. Students will usually have several years experience as trained pedagogues and will be paid for by their local authorities; some local authorities will look for heads of centres to have this qualification.

Other points

Staff in early childhood centres in Denmark have high levels of union membership. The trade unions have played an important role in the development of services, not only in relation to pay and conditions for their members, but also with respect to training (at one stage, unions provided most in-service training courses, but this is no longer the case) and promoting debate and reflection about early childhood pedagogy and institutions.

There is a growing emphasis in Denmark on quality of life for children and their positions as citizens in democracy. This is reflected in a strong emphasis on democracy in the training courses for pedagogues and in working with children; democracy together with equality and dialogue are seen as central values. In practice, this means for example looking at everything from the child's perspective; recognising the child's right to play an active and creative part in his/her own life and in the life of the centre, including decision-making; listening to children (one of the

Government's five broad principles with respect to early childhood services). Staff are seen as active members of centres, working alongside children, rather than as experts or leaders who teach children. Children are understood to have great innate potential, and the task of the pedagogue is to provide such stimulation as is needed to realise that potential.

Sources for Denmark

Danish Ministry of Education, 1994; Danish Rectors Conference of National Institutes for Social Educators, 1995; Danmarks Pædagoghøjskole, 1998; EC Childcare Network, 1996a; Hammershøj, 1992; Jensen and Kjeldsen, 1997; Lauridsen, 1995; personal communication from Claus Jensen, BUPL.

3.2 France

The early childhood system

France also has a well-established and long-standing early childhood system - but very different to Denmark's. Compulsory school age is 6. Services below that age are split. The welfare system is responsible for a range of services for children from 0 to 3 years, including nurseries and organised family day care, with responsibility residing with the Ministry of Employment and Solidarity nationally, and with welfare departments in local authorities; elected authorities at the level of the *Département* also play a role, being responsible for approving private services and providing some subsidies. In addition, an important role is played by *départemental* family allowance funds (*Caisse d'Allocations Familiales)* and their national organisation (*Caisse Nationale d'Allocations Familiales)*. These funds subsidise services in general and stimulate development through the *contrat enfance* programme in which CAFs sign co-finance agreements with local authorities to support the expansion of services for children under 6 years[6].

The education system is responsible for an extensive network of nursery schooling (*écoles maternelles)* for children aged 2 to 6 years. This service is the responsibility of the national Ministry of Education, although local authorities are responsible for providing various inputs, including non-teaching staff, school canteens and supervision during the midday break; they also provide some out-of-school child care. Other out-of school provision is managed by private organisations, and nationally is the responsibility of a third Ministry, Youth and Sport.

There is therefore some overlapping responsibility, in particular 2 year olds who may be in welfare or education system services, while responsibility for children over 3 may be split if they use out-of-school services.

Staffing standards are laid down nationally for welfare system services: 1 adult to 5 children who are not yet walking; and 1 to 8 for other children under 3 years. There are no laid down standards for staff: child ratios in *écoles maternelles*, but in 1993/94 there was on average 1 teacher to every 27 children.

Much provision is heavily and directly publicly funded. Nursery education is free to parents.

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[6]Since 1988, 1800 *contrats enfance* have been signed by the CAFs and local authorities to assist the development of public provision.

Parents contribute to the cost of welfare system services for children under 3 and out-of-school services, the amount varying according to the type of service and levels of family income; the average in 1996 for *crèches collectives* (nurseries for children under 3) was 23%. In addition, there is an extensive system of demand subsidy, including: tax relief for parents' costs in using services for children under 6 (covering both publicly-funded services and private non-subsidised services); a grant for parents using family day carers; and a payment made by the CAF to cover parents' social security contributions as employers of family day carers (a similar payment to cover social security contributions is made for parents employing someone in their own home, and these parents can also claim tax relief on their costs).

Just under a third of children under 3 attend publicly-funded services, but a substantial number in addition attend private services, mainly family day care. Virtually all children aged 3 to 6 attend publicly-funded services. Some receive private out-of-school care, mainly with family day carers

More than half of children under 3 in publicly-funded services are 2 year olds attending *écoles maternelles*. The rest attend either various kinds of nurseries or publicly organised family day care. Attendance at *écoles maternelles* is virtually universal among 3 to 6 year olds. In addition, some children go to publicly-funded out-of-school services, either located within the school or separately.

Welfare system services are open all year and on a full-day basis. *Écoles maternelles* are open during term-times only and from 8.30-16.30 except Wednesday when they are closed all day.

The structure of staffing

There are two systems of staffing. Within the welfare system, in nurseries and other centres, there are three types of worker. The *puéricultrice* usually works as the director of a centre (or a publicly organised family day care scheme). At least half of the staff in centres must be *auxiliaires de puericultrice*. If the centre has more than 40 places, there must be at least one *educatrice de jeunes enfants;* this group of workers are also increasingly applying to be directors of centres, creating a certain degree of tension with *puéricultrices*, who have traditionally had these senior posts.

By contrast, staffing in *écoles maternelles* primarily consists of teachers (*professeurs des écoles).* In addition, classes usually include (at least for a half day) an assistant (*agent spécialisé des écoles maternelles).*

Out-of-school provision is staffed by *animateurs*.

Education and training: basic

The split staffing regime is reflected in staff training. Within the welfare system, the *puéricultrice* will have trained as a medical nurse specialising in paediatric work; this is a four year, post-18 training. In contrast, the *auxiliaire* will have a one year, post-16 training at an *école d'auxiliaire de puericultrice*. The *educatrice* will have a post-18 training lasting two years and four months at a non-university training centre specialising in this particular training (there are 23 specialist training centres mainly run privately, but the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs). The training includes: pedagogy and human development; education and care; child development and

educational practice; group management; law, economics and social studies and professional studies and methods.

Teacher training was reformed and upgraded in 1991. It now takes 5 years - a three year university degree course leading to a *licence* followed by two years professional training at an *institut universitaire de formation des maitres (IUFM)*. The qualification is to teach children from 2 to 11 years. The degree course comprises a two year general studies section and a one year in-depth study of a particular subject. The two year professional training includes studies in education, philosophy, sociology and psychology; specialist courses (*e.g.* work in the *école maternelle*); subject study; preparation for administrative and pastoral work; and optional subjects.

Animateurs, in out-of-school provision, are often students. Nearly half have the *Brevet d'Aptitude aux Fonctions d'Animation*, based on 26 days training; another third are training.

Education and training: continuous
In-service courses are organised on a regional and national basis by the national association of *puéricultrices*.

A range of in-service training courses are available to teachers in IUFMs, regional centres for educational research, in other higher educational institutions and in the schools themselves. Most focus on curriculum issues. Teachers are paid 85% of their salaries during attendance at an officially recognised course. Teachers wishing to take on the post of head teacher have to complete a course of several week's duration.

Sources for France
EC Childcare Network, 1996a; Fagnani and Strobel, 1997; Oberheumer and Ulich, 1997

3.3 New Zealand

The early childhood system
New Zealand is distinct, by comparison with the other countries considered in this section, in at least two respects. Compulsory schooling age is 6 but children can start at 5 and most do so[7]; and there is no significant layer of regional or local government. The main relationship therefore is between national government and individual services or the private organisations that manage the services.

New Zealand was the first country in the world to integrate responsibility for the whole range of early childhood education and care services within the education system. This occurred between 1986 and 1989 (before Spain), partly in the context of a major reform of the whole education system. Implementing the reforms has been an uneven process, partly due to changes in

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[7] In this respect, New Zealand is similar to a number of other countries (*e.g.* Ireland, the Netherlands, Britain) which admit children to primary school before compulsory school age. In these cases, early admission to primary school becomes another form of early childhood service.

government. The reform has also been demanding, but for the same reason very important, because of the range and complexity of early childhood services that have been encompassed within a single framework (the range of services is discussed further in the next section). New Zealand therefore has attempted to balance the achievement of coherence with the maintenance of diversity.

Apart from integrating administrative responsibility for early childhood services within the education system, this reform has led to a common framework covering funding, standards, regulation and staffing. There is also now a national curriculum covering all early childhood services. This is also the first bicultural curriculum statement developed in New Zealand containing curriculum "specifically for Māori immersion services in early childhood education and [establishing], throughout the document as a whole, the bicultural nature of curriculum for all early childhood services" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p.7).

All centres (but not playgroups) have to be licensed to operate. But to access public funding centres also have to be chartered. Chartering involves making a contract between the centre and the Ministry of Education, in which the centre sets out its policies and philosophies, including how the centre plans to work towards higher standards than the minimum licensing level, in return for which the Ministry agrees to provide funding.

Staffing standards are defined in relation to age of children (under 2, over 2 or mixed age) and whether groups attend part-time (called sessional) or all-day. For example, all centres taking children under 2 years on a full-day basis must operate a ratio of at least 1 adult to 5 children, while those taking children aged 2 to 5 years must operate a ratio of at least 1 adult to 6 children, 2 adults to 7 to 20 children and 3 adults to 21 to 30 children (ratios for part-time provision for 2 to 5 year olds are 1 adult to 8 children and 2 adults to 9-30 children).

All chartered services are financed through what is called 'bulk funding', which is paid on the basis of the number of children enrolled and the period for which they are enrolled. A higher level of funding is paid (a) to kindergartens (although the original purpose of the reform was to bring all other services up to the funding level then enjoyed by kindergartens), (b) for children under 2 years (approximately twice the rate for children over 2) and, since 1996, (c) to centres with higher staffing standards so that, in effect, funding is now being used to promote improved staffing standards. The improved standards that attract higher funding are defined in terms of staffing levels and staffing qualifications; for example, a centre will get additional funding if it has a ratio of 1 adult to 4 children under 2 years and one person with a high level qualification *or* if it retains the licensing ratio of 1 adult to 5 children under 2 but has two staff members with a high level qualification.

Bulk funding does not cover all costs and parents therefore usually have to contribute. In addition therefore to bulk funding, there is also a system of fee subsidy for low income families, administered by the Department for Social Welfare.

The early childhood system contains a wide range of services, including:

- kindergartens, a long established education-oriented service for 3 and 4 year olds, run by private non-profit organisations and often provided on a part-time basis (*e.g.* 4 year olds attend in the morning, 3 year olds in the afternoon).

- childcare centres, taking children from 0 to 5 and often open on a full-day, all year basis, which may be run as private businesses, by companies for their employees or by various non-profit organisations.
- playcentres usually cater for children from birth to school age, who attend part-time and are run by parent cooperatives and staffed by parents with some training often with a trained non-parent supervisor.
- playgroups, informal and community-based groups with limited funding and without trained staff.
- Te Kohango Reo, a Maori Community-based initiative with a particular emphasis on supporting Maori language and culture.
- Pacific Island Early Childhood Centres, based around a single language community such as Samoan, Niuean or Tokelauan.
- Family Day Care.

In 1996, there were 160,291 children under five years enrolled with early childhood services, about 54% of the age group (although the actual attendance may be lower due to some children being enrolled with more than one service). There has been a rapid increase in provision and children attending since 1990. The largest growth has been among childcare centres, which now account for 36% of children enrolled in early childhood education and care services. Kindergartens were the most widely used service until 1993, when childcare centres overtook them, but they still accounted for nearly 30% of enrolled children in 1996. Playcentres accounted for 11% of children and Te Kohango Reo for 9%.

The structure of staffing

Before the reform of early childhood services in the 1980s, New Zealand's split system was reflected in the structure of staffing. Kindergartens were staffed by kindergarten teachers, other services by a variety of 'child care' workers. The reform of the system and the reform of training that preceded it has attempted to provide a single staffing framework. The core of this framework has been an integrated early childhood training leading to a Diploma of Education (early childhood education). Although all teachers in kindergarten have this qualification or its equivalent, most staff in other types of services still do not, having either one of a variety of 'child care' qualifications or none at all.

Education and training: basic

There was a major reform of basic training in 1987. A three year integrated training course in colleges of education leading to a Diploma of Education (Early Childhood Education) was introduced, intended to train students to work across the full range of early childhood settings (from childcare centres to kindergartens) and with children from birth to 5 years and heralding the end of distinctions between care and education. This qualification - which since its inception has been regarded as the 'benchmark early childhood qualification'- had parity with training for primary school teachers, with the same pathway into BEd programmes in universities, *i.e.* the diploma was recognised for credit towards degree programmes. At the same time, a strategy was developed to enable existing staff in early childhood services to achieve 'equivalence' with the diploma; to do so, they had to take some further training, but their previous qualifications and experience were taken into account.

A number of developments since 1990 have complicated the situation. Using a system of points

for each of the many different types of qualification (now referred to as the Early Childhood Point System), the original intention was that by 1995 all staff responsible for a centre should have a three year diploma (considered as the equivalent of 120 points) - or a 120 point equivalent training (*i.e.* by taking two or more courses which would add up to 120 points). But in 1991 this objective was changed to 100 'licensing points'; in making the decision, the Government compromised between the Ministry of Education's recommendation that the licensing requirement be set at 120 points (a three year training) and the Treasury recommendation that it be set at 80 points (a two year training). This change has reduced incentives to get higher training. Rather than working towards a diploma level of training, the benchmark early childhood qualification, it is possible to use a range of other qualifications assigned a 100 points or more, of which there were five in 1995.

There is a further lack of coherence in that teachers in kindergarten have to hold a practising certificate from the Teachers' Registration Board (TRB). Because the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) approves a course for a three year diploma qualification provides no guarantee that the teachers' registration board will approve people with diplomas from that course. At the beginning of 1998, 9 colleges or other training providers have had their diploma programmes approved by the NZEA and the TRB, while a further 6 courses have been approved by NZEA but not as yet by TRB.

There remain a large number of lower level 'child care' qualifications, each of which is allocated a certain number of 'licensing points' determined in comparison to the 120 points of the benchmark three year diploma. Indeed the number of courses for these lower level qualifications has grown, as demand for workers in the early childhood sector has increased in response to a rapid expansion of services (especially childcare centres) and reforms in the tertiary sector have enabled more providers to offer early childhood training. This trend is tending to re-emphasise the former split between 'child care' and 'education' training, an artificial division that the three year diploma course sought to remove.

The net result is that whereas most kindergarten staff have a diploma qualification or its equivalent, this is true of less than a third of staff in childcare centres. The reform of funding in 1996, which gives additional money for centres with diploma-trained staff, has revealed a lack of training opportunities, and there are also barriers created by the costs of training. Overall there is a shortage of trained and qualified staff at diploma level. At the same time, pay and conditions are poor, even for staff with diploma level training; average earnings for kindergarten teachers, for example, are 73% of average earnings of other teachers and workers in other types of provision, even with diplomas, earn less. Consequently, there are growing problems in recruiting and retaining staff (in 1995, 45% of all kindergarten jobs were advertised) and falling numbers of applicants for courses.

Finally, the situation has been further complicated by the introduction of a competency-based training model into the early childhood sector, as part of a general development "of a series of national standards for qualifications in many 'industries', including the early childhood 'industry'". Standards are not courses, but represent criteria against which workers in different industries will be assessed by a training provider accredited by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. Standards are meant to be discrete, sequential, portable and measuring competencies or skills that "successful workers actually perform on the job today". The concept of competency

focuses on "action or outcome rather than on the learner or teaching process".

It is envisaged that this National Qualifications Framework will eventually replace the Early Childhood Point System. Work is currently underway to define standards in the early childhood field, as well as in the field of educating teachers to work with older children. However the approach remains difficult to apply and contentious in principle. As a leading early childhood expert has observed:

> The NZQA has decided to apply this model developed for the trades to the field of teacher education in which early childhood has been included. The process as we all know has been fraught, both pedagogically and politically....The debate is not yet resolved. The process of developing unit standards for early childhood and teacher education grinds on. Colleges and Universities continue with the Teacher Change model [i.e. teaching pedagogical understandings which are viewed as an essential part of the process towards the training of practitioners who are ongoing critical thinkers as they work with children] as a basis for their programmes. Reconciling these different philosophical approaches is a challenge and the crux of the debate of whether those people who work with young children in early childhood programmes are just competent technicians or reflective teachers and practitioners" (May, 1996: 71).

This competency-based approach to training is, however, confined so far to courses that lead to national qualifications to be recognised by the NZQA. The universities remain outside, and dominate the training of early years teachers (Diploma of Teaching (ECE) or Bed (ECE)): colleges of education have gradually merged with universities, with only four left, one of which is planning to merge. As of 1999, only a few providers developing courses offering this qualification had sought or were seeking NZQA recognition.

New Zealand therefore has struggled to develop a 'benchmark' early childhood training, the three year diploma, which would be the main qualification across the early childhood workforce. The results to date are limited, leading one early childhood expert to remark that "at present there is no other way to describe the state of early childhood qualifications than as shambolic" (May, 1997, p.28). This has been the product of a lack of sustained government commitment (for example, not insisting on senior staff in all centres having the diploma qualification within a specified time span), inadequate resourcing given a generally low level of training among the existing early childhood workforce, and resistance from some sectors "to the idea that well qualified staff are necessary and need to be paid for" (*ibid.*)

Education and Training: continuous

There is a requirement that all staff in chartered New Zealand centres have access to ongoing professional development. Implementation is the responsibility of each centre. The Government provides funding to centres for professional development, including improving qualifications, which covers much of the costs, and most of the courses are provided by colleges of education. Costs of replacement staff (to cover for workers taking courses) are usually split between government and centre. All chartered centres are supposed to be moving to a system of staff appraisal, which should identify staff development needs.

Sources for New Zealand

Early Childhood Education Project, 1996; Early Childhood Group, 1994; May, 1996, 1997; Mitchell, 1996; New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1990, 1997; New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 1995, 1996; personal communication from Michael Gaffney, University of Otago

2.6 Spain

The early childhood system

Spain has a system of early childhood services in a process of change, following a law in 1990 (*Ley de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo - LOGSE)* which brought about a major reform of the complete educational system from 0 to 18 years. Compulsory schooling starts at 6. But under LOGSE, 0 to 6 is recognised as the first stage of the education system (*educación infantil)*, which in turn is divided into two cycles - 0 to 3 years and 3 to 6 years. Spain therefore was the first European country to officially designate centres for children under 3 as part of the public education system. This has involved a major change in how services for children under 3 are conceptualised: they are recognised as both an educational and public issue, and not just a welfare issue concerned only with parents working or disadvantaged children. More generally, Spain is the first European country to opt for an education-based integrated early childhood service covering the age range 0 to 6.

> With the passing of the LOGSE it has been recognised that education for under sixes has its own characteristics and intrinsic value, which derives from the Act itself and which are put into practice at basic level through the Guidelines of the Curriculum Framework, but which also must be implemented in the organisational structure of each centre, in initial teacher training and subsequent professional development, through the organisation of the service etc.(Balaguer, 1994a:1).

Before LOGSE, responsibility for services was divided between several departments, including Education, Health and Labour. Following the passing of LOGSE, responsibility for early childhood services now rests with the National Ministry of Education and with the Departments of Education in the seven autonomous regions which now have responsibility for education (the other 10 regions do not have responsibility[8]). The Law has led to a new national curriculum for the 0 to 6 age group (*Diseño Curricular Base : Educación Infantil)*; a reform of staff training (described below); a generic title for all services for children under 6 (*escuela infantil);* and, for the first time, a national system of regulation for all services for this age group, with minimum standards.

National standards on staffing are 1 adult for 8 children under 12 months, 1 adult for 13 children aged 12 to 23 months, 1 adult to 20 children aged 24 to 35 months and 1 adult to 25 children aged 3 to 6 years. For children under 3 years, a third of staff must be trained teachers, while for children from 3 to 6 years there must be four teachers for every three groups or classes of children. Some autonomous regions and local authorities however operate higher standards. For example, in nurseries for children under 3 in Barcelona, 80% of staff were teachers.

Article 7 of the LOGSE states that 0 to 6 is not a compulsory stage of education, but that "public authorities shall guarantee the existence of a sufficient number of places to assure the schooling of those who request it". In practice, the government's priority has been to provide universal provision for children aged 3 to 6, and services for children under 3 have received less attention; places for this age group are not yet available on request.

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[8]Responsibility for education is however scheduled to pass to these ten regions during 1998.

Although some centres are age-integrated, for children from 0 to 6, most are either for children under 3 or over 3. There are no official statistics on attendance rates for children under 3 years. Estimates by trades unions suggest 20-30% of this age group attend some form of centre, but that only about 5% attend centres that are publicly funded. Parents earning below a certain income receive some subsidy for their payments through tax relief.

Most children (84% in 1993/94) aged 3 to 6 attend services, nearly all 4 and 5 year olds and just over half of 3 year olds. Most of these places are in publicly-funded schools.

Family day care is rare in Spain; individual care normally involves the carer coming in to the child's home.

Non-school services are open all year and on a full-day basis. School-based services are open during term-times only from 09.00 to 17.00, with a three hour midday break, although an increasing number of schools offer meals and supervised meals during this period. Spain has one of the lowest levels of maternal employment in Europe.

Structure of staffing

LOGSE has led to a major reform in staffing. Article 10 of LOGSE says that "infant education [i.e. 0 to 6] shall be taught by specialized teachers. During the first cycle [i.e. 0 to 3] there shall be other professionals with the appropriate educational qualifications to work with the children". Spain therefore has moved from a system of teachers specialising in work with 3 to 6 year olds, and less highly qualified workers for children under 3, to a system based on an early childhood teacher specialising in work with children from 0 to 6 (*maestro de EGB especialista en educación infantil).* In addition to teachers, there are 'senior worker in early childhood education' (*técnico superior en educación infantil).* Only teachers can work with children aged 3 to 6 years, but both types of worker are found in services for children under 3 years; in the latter case, teachers are normally in the minority except where the management has decided to have a high level of teacher-trained staff. The *técnico superior* may be responsible for a group of 0 to 3 year olds.

Education and Training: basic

The pre-LOGSE teacher training was to teach children aged 3 to 6 years, and took place at teacher training college. The post-LOGSE early childhood teacher has a three year post-18 training to degree level in a university-based teacher training institute; the training, pay and status is at the same level as for primary school teachers. Early childhood is one of six possible areas of specialisation in teacher training; the others are primary education, special education, music education, physical education, and foreign language education. The new training requires higher entry requirements, and the following subject areas account for 55-65% of the timetable: educational psychology, developmental psychology, sociology of education, theories of education, early childhood institutions, centre management, new technologies and media, teaching methods, work with handicapped children, environmental studies, language development, mathematical thinking, music, art and children's literature. A further 20% of the timetable is structured according to local needs (eg. Catalan literature in Catalonia); while the remaining 10-15% may be spent on options chosen by the students.

The other workers - *técnico superior en educación infantil* - have a post-18 training lasting 2,000

hours, of which 1,600 hours are allocated to theoretical subjects (*e.g.* psychology, pedagogy, sociology etc.) and the remaining 400 hours to practical work in centres.

Following LOGSE, there have been special training programmes to enable existing staff, through in-service training, to 'top up' their basic qualifications, for example to become early childhood teachers. Centre-based staff, both in private and publicly-funded services, have until the year 2000 to update their qualifications. In Barcelona, which has been very committed to the principles of LOGSE, this meant that over a five year period the number of teachers in centres for children under 3 rose from 20% to 80% (although this created a new problem in that there were insufficient funds to pay newly qualified staff at the same level as teachers in schools).

Education and Training: continuous

In-service courses for early childhood teachers especially those working in schools are a matter for the education authorities and are held by training institutes or private providers recognised by the authorities. Topics are generally planned by education authorities on an annual basis, and most have focused on the education reforms.

For other workers, especially those working with children under 3, there are courses funded by the Formación Continua Empresarial and mainly offered by trades unions and employers.

LOGSE also required local authorities to offer continuous training. These has varied in how it has been implemented. At its best, for example in the city of Barcelona, it has meant that workers in centres managed by the city authority are employed for 35 hours a week, of which 5 hours is non-contact time set aside for in-service training and meetings. Nurseries have a budget to pay for the training needs that they identify.

There are also courses offered by pedagogical renewal movements, for example the Summer School organised by the Rosa Sensat Institute for 2 weeks every year in Barcelona.

Other points

Spain has started on a major reform, and has the framework for developing a comprehensive, integrated and education-based early childhood education and care service. This reform was based on a five year process of experimentation and public debate:

> Experience with more advanced countries has shown us that relevant changes require long periods of maturity and consensus from the educational community and society as a whole. This is even more the case when it is not a question of ephemeral, but indeed basic structures that must be firmly sustained for many decades...the conviction that a reform of this type, and the desire to organise the Spanish educational system until well into the next century, could not lead to success unless support were gained from a large majority, gave rise to the widest possible debate on the subject, an essential and lasting agreement about basic objectives being its aim. This led, firstly, to embarking upon rigorous experimentation which would then make it possible for the educational community and society as a whole to discuss the matter at length (Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, 1991:10).

Furthermore, the process of educational reform has taken place alongside a process of political

decentralisation, in which powers have been increasingly delegated to regional governments. One consequence of this is that although there is a national curriculum for early childhood services, it allows for a large measure of regional and local responsiveness and variation. At all levels - regional, commune or city - and at the level of the early childhood centre itself there is scope for initiatives, including the recognition of language and culture. The safeguard is that any initiative must be explained in the documentation produced and systematically evaluated.

But progress remains uneven and much still needs to be done before the potential of LOGSE is fully realised. In particular, because of the increasingly decentralised structure of the country, progress has varied between different areas, while attention has been mainly focused on services for children over 3. Even with this age group there is a challenge. Although LOGSE "emphasises the value of each educational stage rather than simply viewing them as a springboard for future development" (Balaguer, 1993: 47), and does not refer to 'school readiness' or specific subject areas, early childhood services are still struggling to free themselves from their tradition of being a downward extension of primary schooling, a preparation for compulsory schooling.

Sources for Spain

Balaguer, 1993, 1994a, b; EC Childcare Network, 1996a; Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, 1991; Oberhuemer and Ulich,1997.

3.7 Sweden

The early childhood system

Compulsory school age is 7, although all local authorities must provide school places for 6 year olds whose parents want them to attend. All early childhood education and care services for children are integrated within one system. Previously, as in other Scandinavian countries, the system was located in the social welfare system, with national responsibility residing with the Ministry of Social Affairs and the National Board of Health and Welfare. But in 1996-1997, responsibility was transferred nationally to the Ministry for Education and the National Agency for Education; while in January 1998, legislation on early childhood services has been transferred from the Social Services Act to the School Act. This process of transfer had already been undertaken by most locally authorities, who throughout the early 1990s were moving to integrate responsibility for schools, early childhood education and care services and other childhood services (such as services providing care and recreation for school-age children). Sweden therefore has become the second European country to opt for an education-based integrated early childhood service. Unlike Spain, however, Sweden has had the advantage of building on an early childhood service that is already well developed and has been integrated for many years.

One consequence of this reform has been the publication of a draft curriculum for children aged 1 to 6 years (i.e. up to 72 months), complementing a revised curriculum for school-age children.

Sweden has also undergone a movement in recent years to greater decentralisation. As in Denmark, there are now no national standards for early childhood education and care services, the matter being left to individual local authorities to determine. Consequently there are local variations, for example staff ratios vary from 1 adult to 3 to 5 children under 3 and from to 2 to 3.5 adults to 18-20 children aged 3 to 6 years. It should be noted, however, that there are very few

children under 12 months in public services because of a well developed and popular system of paid Parental Leave (the number of children under 12 months in publicly-funded services has fallen from 3,000 in 1974 to just 155 in 1994; while in 1995, only 3% of children under 12 months received some form of non-parental care compared to 42% of 1 year olds and 60-75% of children aged 2 to 6).

Most provision is publicly funded and most (about 90%) is publicly managed, despite official encouragement in recent years of privately-managed services and some increase in this type of provision; parental co-operatives are the commonest form of privately-managed service. In 1994, parents contributed on average 14% of the cost of publicly-funded services, and this proportion has been steadily increasing. A law passed in 1995 places a duty on local authorities to provide services for children aged 12 months to 12 years, "within a reasonable time" - in other words providing an entitlement to publicly-funded early childhood education and care services except for children under 12 months (who are assumed to be at home with parents on parental leave). Following a rapid increase in services over the last 20-25 years, most local authorities were meeting this goal before the legislation was passed. Services continued to expand rapidly in the 1990s, with enrolments increasing by 20% in the first half of the decade. At the same time, however, economic pressures in the early 1990s led many authorities to reduce standards in their services in particular to increase group size and reduce staffing levels: whereas previously there would have been 12-15 children in a group, the figures now vary considerably, averaging 16.5 children per group.

In 1994, a third of children aged 0 to 3 attended publicly-funded services (although given Parental Leave this might more realistically be presented as a half of 1 and 2 year olds), and three quarters of 3 to 6 year olds. More recent figures show that 70% of children between 12 months and 6 years attend publicly-funded services, 57% going to centres and 13% to organised family day care. In addition, most 6 year olds attend some form of publicly-funded service; 95% go to part-time preschool classes, which offer 525 hours per year, and many of these children also go to centres providing care and recreation for school-age children. Pre-school classes and centres providing care and recreation for school-age children are often integrated into schools.

Like Denmark, Sweden has a mixture of centre-based services and publicly organised family day care. However, the role of the latter is less significant in Sweden (and decreases every year), accounting for only a quarter of children aged under 3 in publicly-funded services and just over a fifth of children aged 3 to 6. Moreover, most centre-based services are age-integrated, taking children from 1 to 6; unlike Denmark, there are not day nurseries for under 3s and kindergartens for 3 to 6 year olds.

All services are open all year and on a full-day basis, reflecting the high employment rate among mothers and fathers.

The structure of staffing

There are two types of worker in centre-based services: pre-school teachers (*förskollärе*), or pedagogues; and childcare assistants (*barnskötare*). About 60% of staff are pre-school teachers and 35% childcare assistants, the proportion of teachers increasing over time while the proportion of assistants has fallen.

Education and training: basic

In 1993, courses for pre-school teachers were increased from two and a half to three years. Basic training is at a post-18 level, in the higher education sector, either in universities or university colleges. Courses lead to a University Diploma in Child and Youth Studies, with a specialisation either in early childhood education or leisure-time education. This is one of 45 university diplomas which are specifically professionally oriented and which primarily cover professions requiring authorization or registration (*e.g.* school teachers, doctors). These diploma courses range in length from 2.5 to 5 years. Diplomas are one of three types of degree, the other two being bachelor's and a master's degrees which are general rather than professional.

School teachers working with grades 1 to 6 also take a diploma course, while teachers working with grades 7 to 9 take a subject-based degree followed by a subject diploma. In general, pre-school teachers earn less than school teachers, but they can become the head of a primary school, or become school teachers by taking a short additional course.

Although school and pre-school teachers train in the same institutions, they are trained separately. A proposal in the 1980s to integrate the training was not implemented. However, a Parliamentary Committee is currently considering the training of both types of teacher and the possibilities for integrating their training to some extent, for example to include one year of shared training. Both groups of workers are already in the same trade union (unlike Denmark, where pedagogues and school teachers have separate trade unions and there is generally a greater separation between the two professions).

Basic training is free, there is a maintenance grant and access to loans.

The training for childcare assistants consists of a three year post-16 training, within upper secondary school; the length of the training was increased from two to three years in 1994. Upper secondary schools (for the 16 to 19 age group) are organised into 16 different national programmes, one of which is 'childcare and leisure time education'. All students take 8 core subjects, plus subjects specific to each programme.

Education and Training: continuous

Until 1993, it was recommended that pre-school teachers have at least 30 hours of in-service training per year, but that guidance has now been withdrawn and responsibility for further training rests with local authorities. Consequently, availability and content varies from place to place.

Universities offer a number of long-term courses, ranging from 6 weeks to a year or more on a range of subjects. The pre-school teacher diploma also carries a certain number of credits which can be built on by staff who want to work for a higher degree.

Sources for Sweden

EC Childcare Network, 1996a; Oberhuemer and Ulich,1997; Ryking, 1996; Swedish Institute, 1996; Swedish Ministry of Education and Science, 1997.

3.6 Britain

The early childhood system

Compulsory school age is 5, but most children are admitted to reception class (grade 1) at 4. Until 1998, administrative responsibility for services was split. The education system and education departments were responsible for school-based nursery education, mainly provided in *nursery classes* attached to primary schools, and 4 year olds in reception class. These services are provided free of charge to parents and provide for 3 and 4 year olds. This school-based provision is available during term time only. Nursery education is usually provided on a part-time basis, with children attending either a morning or an afternoon session, and only a minority attending for the full school day. Reception class attendance, by contrast, is usually for the full school day. In 1998, the great majority of 4 year olds (79%) were attending school, either in nursery or reception classes, with approximately equal numbers attending part time and full time.

Remaining services for pre-school children - referred to in legislation as 'day care services' - were the responsibility of the welfare system, which meant the Department of Health in England. The most common form of service was playgroups, usually run by parents groups and other non-profit organisations, and mainly offering sessional care (usually mornings) for a few days a week during term times. However, a rapid growth of employment amongst women with young children since the late 1980s has led to a rapid growth in private, for-profit nurseries in recent years, the numbers increasing more than five-fold between 1987 and 1998; the number of public day nurseries, available mainly to children considered to be in need or at risk, has fallen back over the years (some have converted into 'family centres') and now constitute less than 10% of all day nurseries. During this period, numbers of family day carers also increased substantially, although since the mid-1990s, their numbers have begun to decline. With some limited exceptions, parents generally paid the full cost of these services, and services have been regulated (which includes initial registration and annual inspections) by local authorities under the terms of the Children Act 1989.

In sum, in 1996 there were nearly one and a half million places in early childhood services in England[*]. Just over half a million of these places (530,000) were in the education system, in nursery schools (30,400), nursery classes (170,250) and reception classes (329,400). Nearly a million places were in the welfare system (942,700), with similar numbers of places at childminders (365,200) and in playgroups (383,700), and the remainder in day nurseries (193,800), most of which were in private rather than public nurseries. It should be noted that these figures refer to places, rather than children attending: the two figures may differ considerably where substantial numbers of places are used part time, i.e. more than one child uses each place. As already noted most nursery class places are used on this basis and it was estimated in 1993 that 1.8 children on average used every playgroup place, while a 1998 survey estimated 1.6 children used every place in private nurseries.

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[*] This section refers to England; the full picture for the UK would also need to include Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland which account for about 15% of the total population. Broadly, the pattern of provision and policy developments are similar in all four nations of the UK, but with some significant variations which are likely to increase, especially in Scotland, with devolution.

Staffing standards are laid down nationally for all services. Nursery classes should have a ratio of 2 adults to 26 children, with one adult being a teacher. Nurseries and playgroups should have 1 adult to 3 children for children under 2, 1 to 4 for 2 year olds and 1 to 8 for 3 and 4 year olds. Childminders should care for no more than 3 children at any one time, including their own.

Since the return of the Labour Government at the May 1997 election there have been significant changes, which have been summarised as follows:

> The first 36 months of the Labour Government have seen unparalleled attention and resources devoted to early childhood services. Educational provision has been made for all 4 year olds and is to be extended to at least two-thirds of 3 year olds by 2002; a National Childcare Strategy has been proposed, and is being implemented by early years development and childcare partnerships, informed and guided by childcare audits and local early years development and childcare plans; the *Sure Start* initiative targets children under 3 and their families in disadvantaged areas, with 250 local programmes envisaged by the end of 2002; a programme of Centres of Early Excellence, intended to highlight 'best practice' has been launched; new sources of [public] funding have been provided, including a childcare tax credit introduced in October 1999; two of the existing systems for regulating early years education and child care in the voluntary and private sectors (inspections by OFSTED [the national agency with responsibility for the inspection of the school system] under Section 122 of the Nursery Education and Grant Maintained Schools Act 1996 and by social services under the Children Act 1989) are being brought together within OFSTED, and a new set of national standards is being drafted; desirable learning outcomes have been replaced by early learning goals "which set out what most children are expected to achieve by the end of the reception year" (QCA, 1999a, p.3); and the QCA together with the National Training Organisation (NTO) have produced a national Qualifications and Training Framework for the early years (QCA, 1999b) (Moss, forthcoming).

These developments have occurred within a new administrative framework, with responsibility for day care services transferred from the Department of Health to the Department of Education in March 1998. However, although responsibility for early childhood services is now with one department, responsibility has remained divided between two parts of DfEE - the 'early years division' and the 'child care unit' (in addition, there is now also a Sure Start Unit, directing a programme focused on under 4s and their families in areas of high disadvantage located within DfEE). As well as staffing, other features of the system remain divided. Part-time 'education' for three and four year olds is expanding, mainly though schools, but also through other services which meet conditions, and is free to parents; a new tax credit provides a subsidy to low and middle-income families using 'child care'; other families receive no subsidy. While all regulation is integrated with OFSTED, the agency for school inspection, the system remains separate from inspection of schools.

The structure of staffing

The split system produces a split staffing structure. School-based early childhood services (which have long been in the education system) are staffed by a cadre of teachers. Pay and conditions are similar to other teachers in primary school. In those early childhood services that have been part of the welfare system until recently, staff divide mostly into nursery workers (referred to as

'nursery nurses' or 'nursery officers'), playgroup workers and family day carers (referred to as 'childminders'). In practice, on the ground matters are not so clear cut. Teachers working with under 5s in school settings are usually assisted by staff with a nursery nurse qualification, while a few staff in private day nurseries and playgroups have a teaching qualification. (Jobs as assistants in school settings are much sought after by nursery nurses, not least because they offer better pay and conditions than working in day nurseries).

But despite these reservations, it is still basically the case that the split system of early childhood services produces a split, and two tier system of staffing: teacher based staffing in schools, and what might be called a 'childcare' based staffing for remaining provisions. This is reflected in pay and conditions. All data show that teachers are paid substantially more than nursery nurses. For example, one estimate made in 1999 concluded that hourly earnings for teachers were £17 per hour, for nursery nurses between £2.10 and £10.28 per hour, for playgroup workers £2.69 per hour and for childminders £1-3 per hour per child: this compares to national earnings of £8.62 per hour for full-time workers. Other estimates based on data from the Labour force Survey concluded that average gross weekly earnings were £373 for teachers, £142 for nursery nurses and £47 for playgroup leaders; even allowing for different working weeks (teachers averaged 41 hours, nursery nurses 31 and playgroup leaders 17), there are still big differences. Pay rates for some nursery workers have been so low that they have benefitted from the introduction in 1999 of a national minimum wage (set at £3.60 per hour); indeed, the introduction of this measure has been a source of some discussion about how some nurseries will manage to meet increased staff costs.

More specifically, the minority of nursery nurses and playgroup leaders working in the public sector earn more than those in the private sector. Other employment conditions are also better for teachers and childcare workers in the public sector than for those working in the private sector or who, like childminders, are self-employed.

Overall the situation of childcare staff has been summed up thus: "[they] are overwhelmingly women and are strikingly badly paid...Staff have poor conditions of work and do long hours with little access to training or support. Morale can be low and the best often leave for better prospects elsewhere" (Daycare Trust, 1999). A recent national survey found an annual turnover rate of 16% (i.e. leavers in the previous year as a percentage of employment at the end of the period).

Education and training : basic

Most teachers have completed a four year degree level training, mostly to work with children across the compulsory school age divide (i.e. in nursery classes and primary school classes). Other staff have much lower levels of training. For staff in nurseries, the most common form of training is a 2 year post-16 level course at a further education college; about half have one of the qualifications from this level of training. But a fifth of nursery workers have no relevant training. A parallel study of playgroup staff found that a quarter had no relevant qualification, and that the most common qualification was from one or other of the courses provided by the playgroups' national organisation, at a lower level than the main nursery nurse training. Most family day carers (68%) had no relevant qualification, the most common qualification being either a nursery nurse or playgroup qualification.

As well as college-based courses, there has been a development in recent years of 'competence-

based' qualifications (NVQs - national vocational qualifications), but so far only a small proportion of childcare workers have this type of qualification (5-6% of workers in nurseries and playgroups)

The reforms underway since 1997 include training and qualifications. Rather than a fundamental review and reform across the whole field (including teachers), the government has settled for reform within the parameters of the existing system and focusing on childcare. At present there are a vast array of training courses and qualifications. A recent mapping exercise of training available to childcare workers in Britain identified a total of 1325 programmes, ranging from 2 hours in service training to 3 year full-time courses; further analysis whittled this down to 749 programmes which "have the potential to be part of the national training framework or could be measured in terms of equivalency to other, better known programmes".

The Government has given the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) the task of bringing some order to this "confusing array of vocational qualifications and training courses for those working in early years education, childcare and playwork". The QCA has been asked to develop a National Qualifications and Training Framework. This framework sets out the skills and competencies people with children will need to develop and groups qualifications together according to their level (there are 6 levels from 'entry level' to 'level 5') and category (general, vocationally-related and occupational).

Education and training : continuous

A recent survey of private nurseries found that only a third had a training budget, which averaged £529 a year. However, most nurseries (85%) said they had provided some form of 'in service' training in the previous 6 months: the five main topics (in descending order) were: First Aid/Health and Safety; Desirable Learning Goals (the government's targets for children's attainment); child protection; food hygiene; and special needs. Overall, many childcare workers have little or no access to ongoing training opportunities, with most of these opportunities consisting of short courses. However some (16% of nursery workers according to a recent national survey) are working for qualifications, mostly the competence-based NVQs referred to above.

Sources for the United Kingdom

Bertram & Pascal (1999); Cameron, Moss & Owen, 1999; Daycare Trust, 1999; Employers Organisation/Improvement & Development Agency (EO/IDeA), 1999a,b; HERA2 (1998); Moss, 1999, forthcoming; Owen, 1999; QCA, 1999a,b.

3.7 Family Day Care in the European Union[10]

The organisation of family day care

Family day care is an important provider of early childhood services in most countries of the

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[10]Most of this section is drawn from a report prepared for the EC Childcare Network on Family Day Care in Europe by Malene Karlsson (1995), together with recent personal communications with this author to update some countries.

European Union (although it is not clear how common this form of provision is in Spain, Italy and Greece). It is a particularly important form of provision for children under 3 years, although in some countries it may also be widely used to provide care for children up to 8 or older outside of school or kindergarten hours.

It is possible to distinguish three broad types of family day care:

- family day carers who are part of an organised family day care scheme, that is where a public or private organisation recruits, employs, pays and supports a group of family day carers, usually supervised and supported by one or more workers. In most cases, the costs of family day care in organised schemes are heavily subsidised from public funds. Parents make an income-related contribution, but this is usually paid to the organisation responsible for the scheme rather than direct to the family day carer; in this way, the funding operates on a similar basis to publicly-funded early childhood centres.

- self-employed family day carers who are approved and regulated by public authorities;

- self-employed family day carers who operate entirely privately and without any public supervision, either because there is no system of regulation or because they operate illegally outside the system of regulation.

There are however some cases which do not fall neatly under one of these three headings. For example, in the Netherlands family day care is organised by private (non-profit) organisations, who employ staff to recruit family day carers, to provide some support and to match parents with family day carers; generally, though, these organisations do not employ family day carers who operate as self-employed providers. In Austria, two large private organisations run organised schemes which employ family day carers, while a third offers support but not employment to affiliated family day carers. Other family day carers are quite independent of any organisation, although legally they are supposed to be approved by local authorities. In Britain, local authorities have a legal duty to provide 'day care' for children defined by welfare workers as 'in need', and may fulfil this duty by placing such children with family day carers, and paying for these placements from public funds. In some cases, local authorities may pay retainer fees to selected family day carers to ensure that places are available for children 'in need' when required.

Organised family day care is extensive in Denmark, Finland and Sweden, accounting for most of this family day care. It is also widespread in France and Belgium, although there are also many self-employed family day carers in these countries. It can also be found to a lesser extent in Portugal and Austria. In other countries, family day carers are overwhelmingly self-employed private providers.

Regulation varies considerably between countries. Some countries (*e.g.* Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Greece, Italy, Spain) have no regulation at all. In other cases (*e.g.* Norway, Portugal, Sweden) private family day carers are not regulated, although family day care within organised schemes is closely supervised and regulated. In the case of Denmark, only private family day carers providing for more than two children are regulated. Finally, in other countries (*e.g.* Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Britain), all family day carers should be officially approved and regulated, although the proportion of family day carers who are 'legal' may vary considerably.

Training

Within family day care organisations, there are lively debates about the employment situation of family day carers: for example, between the freedom of being a self-employed and independent family day carer and the security and support of being a family day carer employed in an organised scheme; and whether it is possible and desirable to see family day carers as professionals. The arguments against professionalism are that anyone can become a family day carer at present, and that a professional family day carer may lose some flexibility and some of the 'motherly approach' that some people value. The argument for professionalism is the need for recognition of the importance of the work done by family day carers and the need to improve the standards, employment conditions and training of family day carers. Most organisations and authorities working for family day care advocate professionalisation. However, this course would have major resource implications: family day carers represent a very large group of workers, overwhelmingly women, most of whom currently have little or no specialised early childhood training and poor working conditions, including lack of social benefits and poor pay.

Family day carers have very varying backgrounds. Levels of education vary and most will not have any formal early childhood training or qualifications. No European country requires a special training before a person can start work as a family day carer (although in Sweden and Finland it is recommended that family day carers wanting to work in organised schemes should have a basic training as a childcare assistant (Sweden) or generic carer (Finland)). The importance of training has come to be realised in most countries, and is increasingly offered. But the length and contents vary, as does the relationship to other forms of early childhood training.

In many respects, the most ambitious approach to family day care training is found in Finland. Since 1980, all family day carers in organised schemes have been required to attend a special 250 hour training course either before they start work or during their first six months in an organised scheme; if the local authority needs family day carers, it pays the costs, otherwise the carers pay themselves. In 1993, however, this training changed in a significant way. The Board of Education introduced a new qualification which requires a basic training course common and open to all workers in social and health care and which is recognised for further training courses. This basic training is available either for young people, directly after school, in which case it lasts 100 weeks; or for older women and men with work experience, in which case the length varies depending on the student's prior experience. Most of the training is common for all social and health workers, but the last 10-20 weeks consists of specialized courses, for example working with young children. The course involves competency-based assessment, together with written and oral presentations, and provides a qualification which can be a basis for further studies in high school or university. Many local authorities have already adapted this training and many family day carers attend these courses.

A similar approach, which integrates family day care training into a broader early childhood training scheme, can be seen in the new training (pedagogical basic training) recently introduced in Denmark, available either to untrained centre workers or family day carers. This training takes account of prior experience and is recognised for the purposes of going on to further training (for further details, see 'Denmark' above). The same idea is being developed in Sweden, where the University of Linköping is planning a course, due to start in Autumn 1998, which would be open to family day carers and childcare assistants (amongst others). The course will be modular, with credits for each module, and very flexible, for example part-time or full-time and summer

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courses. The final qualification will be comparable to a pre-school teacher's diploma, but with an orientation towards the pedagogy of care and play; but students can decide how far and how fast they wish to proceed.

Another example of this integrative approach comes from Britain, where in recent years there has been the development of National Vocational Qualifications in Care and Education, a competence-based qualification for which standards are defined nationally and which is open potentially to all workers in early childhood education and care services, including family day carers.

Otherwise, there is a range of training that is specific to family day carers. In Portugal, and Austria a special introductory course is compulsory for all family day carers who wish to be part of an organised scheme; while in Denmark local authorities do not have to provide such courses, but if they do it is compulsory for family day carers to attend. Non-compulsory introductory courses can be found in a number of countries, such as Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and Britain. In-service training is available for family day carers in most countries with organised schemes; in these countries, the local authority or organisation running the scheme often make the in-service training compulsory for the family day carers who usually get paid for their time. In-service training may also be offered to self-employed family day carers, usually by local authorities or other support organisations. The training is rarely compulsory, nor are the family day carers paid for their time. The main exception is France, where 60 hours training for all family day carers is required by law; all family day carers must have this training, whether they work in an organised scheme or work privately as self-employed workers.

Training family day carers raises a number of very practical issues. Cost is a recurring problem, given the low earnings and self-employed status of most family day carers. As family day carers work alone in their own homes, it is always difficult to find a good time for training courses. To receive daytime training requires arrangements to provide alternative care for the family day carers' children, but evening courses can be very hard for family day carers who have had long working days. There may also be transport problems, especially in more rural areas where childminders are widely dispersed. Last but not least, most training courses for family day carers are not recognised in any other job.

A final point concerns the education and training of the supervisors for family day care, either within organised schemes or for independent, self-employed family day carers. In her report for the EC Childcare Network, Malene Karlsson (1995) comments:

> In the Nordic countries, the supervisors have almost always trained to work with children in kindergartens or other centre-based services or else they have another child-oriented basic training. In Germany, Austria and the UK the supervisor most often is a trained social worker or has another social-orientated training....In Belgium, France and Portugal the supervisor often has a health background, training as a nurse.
>
> These differences may be seen as indicators of the view taken of family day care, and of children's needs....But what is most striking is that none of these different backgrounds give all the knowledge needed to supervise family day carers. In **no** country is it considered necessary for supervisory and support staff to have actually worked as family

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day carers. This means that family day carers receive supervision and support from professional workers who have no direct experience of the work! In this aspect, the job of the family day carers and the supervisors is alike - neither have real vocational training (63).

4.13 Continuous training for early childhood workers can take various forms. It may mean providing opportunities for workers to take basic or further training on an in-service, part-time basis. It may mean providing training on particular subjects or skills through attending 'one off' courses or other means. It may also be thought of as a continuous process of professional development that is built in to the everyday work of the service. For example, the world-famous early childhood services in Reggio-Emilia place great emphasis on 'pedagogical documentation', a process of dialogue, confrontation and critical reflection about the pedagogical work in each centre which involves early childhood workers and others. This ongoing process of deepening understanding is part of the everyday life of each centre. Time is made for documenting the pedagogical work and for discussion and reflection on that work, with the assistance of *pedagogistas*, who work with a small group of centres and the workforces in those centres to develop a critical and reflective approach to pedagogical work.

4.14 However defined, continuous training raises a number of issues. How much should be made available? In Spain (and parts of Italy), over 10% of staff time is set aside for work not involving direct contact with children, including training. This example led the EC Childcare Network (1996c) to propose 10% non-contact time as a 'quality target' in early childhood services. What are the costs and who should meet them, not only of the training itself but to enable early childhood workers to have time to engage in such training? More broadly, the example of the *pedagogistas* in Reggio points to the need to consider the support systems for early childhood workers - whether in centres or family day carers. What opportunities do early childhood workers have to reflect critically and in relationship to others on their work? What means are available to enable early childhood workers to identify their needs for further training? Who can help ensure that early childhood workers get that training?

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